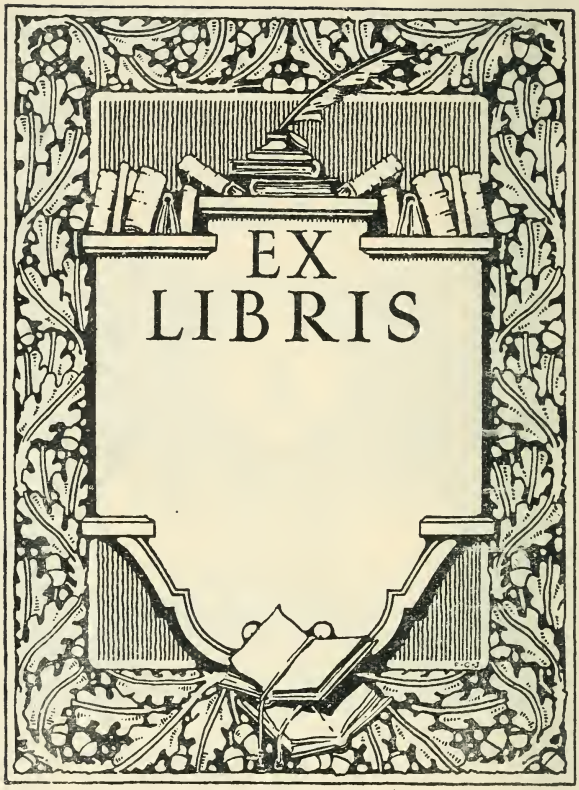
MARSHAL FOCH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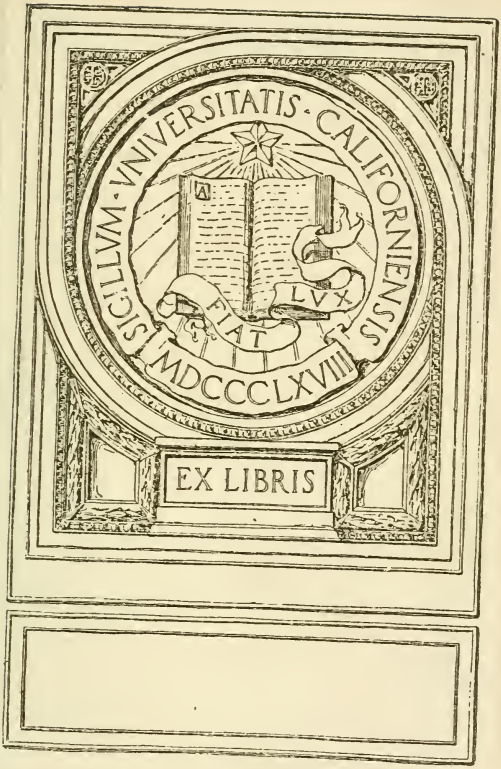
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MARSHAL FOCH

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

MARSHAL JOFFRE AND MARSHAL FOCH.

MARSHAL FOCH

HIS LIFE, HIS WORK, HIS FAITH

BY

RENÉ PUAUX

TRANSLATED BY

E. ALLEN

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THREE months have passed since I first handed this little book of faith and hope to my publishers. Destiny has fulfilled itself. Victory has smiled on the Allied flags, and in response to the wishes of a grateful people the Government of the Republic have raised General Foch to the dignity of Marshal of France.

I am writing these lines in a village on the banks of the Aisne. German prisoners, taken last night, are pouring in in their hundreds, covered with dust. To-morrow before daybreak we attack again. Will the blow we are going to strike break the last resistance of the enemy, who, but yesterday, was soiling the fair land of Valois ? Will it mean a withdrawal to the Ailette, the prelude

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of a great retreat to the Meuse, the last act before final defeat? We cannot tell, but our bosom swells with faith in our country. We feel that the clear genius of France, upheld by the heroic effort of her companions in arms—all the free nations of the world—is at last imposing her law on sombre German materialism, and that humanity is saved.

August 19th, 1918.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

DURING the grave days we are passing through, we must, as we do when our minds are invaded by philosophic or religious doubt, concentrate all our effort on the reasons for faith. We have never doubted and never could have doubted the final issue of the war, for to imagine a victorious Germany would mean making up one's mind to renounce for ever the eternal ideal of humanity. We know not how and when we shall win, but we know that we shall win.

From the day that the German offensive was first launched, and all through the time when the German progress was causing such keen anxiety to so many, and my friends were begging me for words of comfort, for encouraging news,

for an explanation of our operations in the field, I had always but one word to say in reply : FOCH.

By gathering together here the notes I have collected on the supreme head of the allied armies, I believe I shall be doing a service to all those who desire to base their faith on definite proofs.

I hope that my little book, although necessarily incomplete, will be of some value.

I humbly trust that the chief under whose orders I have had the honour of serving will accept this modest token of faithful homage.

May 6th, 1918.

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Quelle que soit la situation à résoudre à la queue, on ne trouve encore pour éviter l'erreur, la faute, le désastre, pour fixer la tactique à pratiquer un jour donné, qu'une seule ressource — mais celle-là sûre et féconde, — le culte exclusif, entendu dans le sens le plus élevé et le plus précis, de deux abstractions du domaine moral: le Devoir, la discipline.

Le 27. 6. 17

F. Foch

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

FERDINAND FOCH was born at Tarbes on October 2nd, 1851. He was the second of a family of four children—one girl, the eldest, and three boys.

His father was Secretary-General of the Prefecture. The family, of old Pyrenean stock, hailed originally from Valentine, a fair-sized village, or rather a small town, in Haute-Garonne, about two miles from Saint-Gaudens. It is one of these peaceful little townships lying in lovely country at the foot of a spur of the Pyrenees. Life is very pleasant there, and one's very soul seems to be lifted up to the neighbouring mountain tops.

A modest fortune had enabled the grandfather to build a substantial family

residence here about 1870, and Ferdinand Foch used to come and spend his holidays there. It is still occupied by his sister. His parents lie in the village cemetery.

One of the surrounding hills, the Bout-du-Puy, with its hermitage and its pilgrimage to the Chapel of the Virgin, was one of Foch's favourite walks. From there, there is a glorious view over the whole valley of the Garonne.

Ferdinand Foch's mother, Sophie Dupré, came from Argelès, in the Hautes-Pyrénées, and was a daughter of Chevalier Dupré, an officer in the time of the First Empire, whom Napoleon had made a chevalier after the Spanish War of 1808–9. He was the pride of the family, and his campaigns and the whole heroic time of Napoleon were often talked of. As one can well imagine, the *coup d'état* of December 2nd, 1851 found but little opposition in a household where the very name of Bonaparte was worshipped.

Ferdinand Foch began his studies at

the College of Tarbes—an old building with this quaint inscription on the gate :

" Siste domus donec fluctus formica marinos
Ebibat et totum testudo perambulet orbem."

(" *May this house stand until the ant has drunk the waves of the sea and the tortoise made the circuit of the world.*"

His school life was not marked by any very striking feature. He was a studious, hard-working lad, and perhaps rather serious for his age. At twelve he was reading Thiers' *History of the Consulate and the Empire.* When he was still in the Fourth, his mathematics master said of him : " Mathematical turn of mind ; we'll see him at the École Polytechnique yet." [1]

His father having been appointed *Payeur du Trésor* at Rodez, the boy was sent to school there, and later on to Polignan. In 1867 the post of *Payeur du Trésor* was abolished and M. Foch was

[1] The École Polytechnique corresponds more or less to the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.—*Translator's Note.*

appointed Receiver of Taxes at Saint-Étienne. Here he sent his son to the College of Saint-Michel, run by the Jesuits, where Ferdinand Foch prepared for his *baccalauréat.*

At the end of the Empire, *congréganiste* teaching played a very large part in preparing boys for the great State schools. Among the colleges famous at that time was the College of Saint-Clément at Metz, run by the Jesuits. It was a religious establishment in the Rue de Pontiffroy, which had been disestablished under the Revolution and restored to the Jesuits by Napoleon III. Students flocked to it from all parts of the world, and notably from Poland. Day-pupils came from the big neighbouring towns, such as Strasburg and Nancy.

Ferdinand Foch arrived at Metz to prepare for the École Polytechnique just before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. In his first year, by the unanimous vote of his fellow-students, he won the *Grand Prix de Sagesse.*

The war supervened. Foch left Metz and joined the army for the period of the war. He was posted to the depôt of the 4th Infantry Regiment at Saint-Étienne, 24th Company, 4th Battalion, and then sent to Chalon-sur-Saône where he was discharged in January 1871, on the signing of peace. On leaving the army he went back to Saint-Clément to finish his studies.

His return to the capital of Lorraine made a most profoundly painful impression on young Foch's mind. The college was partly occupied by German troops, and on their way to the lectures of Father Saussier, an old marine officer who had taken orders, or of Father Lacouture, a famous teacher of mathematics, the students were continually running into the soldiers belonging to the army of occupation. This was an ineffaceable memory.

Ferdinand Foch sat for his written examinations at Nancy. The painful feelings aroused at Metz could not but

be emphasised here. General Manteuffel had chosen Nancy as the head-quarters of the army of occupation, and with that peculiarly German tact used to have a full musical Retreat sounded through the streets of the town. It was really heart-rending, and Ferdinand Foch never forgot it. Forty-two years afterwards, when he was appointed to the Command of the 20th Lorraine Corps, he arranged that there should be on the day he entered Nancy (August 23rd, 1913), a great musical Retreat, taken part in by the bands and trumpeters of the six town regiments. It was an unforgettable night. The strains of *Sambre-et-Meuse* and the *Marche Lorraine* went far to blot out the painful memories of 1871 that had haunted him all his life.

THE ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE

CHAPTER II

THE ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE

YOUNG Foch entered the École Polytechnique on November 1st, 1871, at the saddest period the School had ever known. The disasters of war, the horrors of the Commune, weighed on every mind and strangled every attempt at gaiety. Some of the old students, like Gayet, had died in the School hospital; others had perished on the field of honour.

In May of the same year a band of soldiers of the Commune (*fédérés* they were called), a motley collection from every quarter of the town—the Rue Galande, la Villette, Belleville—headed by a miserable little cobbler in the Rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, whose idea was to shoot every one he came across, had invaded the School and installed them-

selves there. Their reign was short, however, for on May 24th the School was stormed by the 17th Battalion of Chasseurs, belonging to the Versailles Army, and the occupants had to flee for their lives by way of the chemistry laboratory.

In the meantime the School had unfortunately been hit by more than one shell from the Père-Lachaise batteries then bombarding the Panthéon. One of them had burst in the School hospital, seriously wounding one of the male attendants.

In the days that followed, the great recreation ground was turned into a place for executing the *fédérés* taken in the neighbourhood, among them being Maurice Treillard, the Chairman of the Public Relief Committee under the Commune. The billiard-room was used as a temporary Morgue.

It is easy to imagine what must have been the thoughts of a twenty-year-old student coming from Metz and Nancy

into this atmosphere of sadness and death. He needed great force of will not to fling everything up in desperation. It was no light task to set his mind to study, to think of the future, and to have faith that France would rise again triumphant from the terrible blow that had just been struck her. What were his thoughts as he sat reading in the vast "Bibelo" library (now disappeared)? Was that great epic period of Napoleon on which he had been brought up gone for ever? Had the motto that had been given to the School on December 3rd, 1804, by the Emperor —"Everything for Country, knowledge, and glory"—no longer any meaning?

Yet, by some strange coincidence, he discovered here once more in the École Polytechnique, which now occupied the buildings of the old College of Navarre, the same old motto that he had so often read on the gate of the College of Tarbes:

"Siste domus donec fluctus formica marinos
Ebibat et totum testudo perambulet orbem."

A poet of Navarre in times gone by had thus expressed his good wishes for his countrymen's school. Ferdinand Foch, too, was a Pyrenean. The School was to some extent *his* school. The Pyreneans are an obstinate race, a mountain people accustomed to hardship. He would have to fight; he *would* fight.

Among his fellow-students was young Ruffey, a Bourguignon. The two met again in 1914, the one at the head of an Army, the other at the head of an Army corps.

Foch had entered the School seventy-sixth, and was placed forty-seventh at the end of his course. He stayed only a year and a half and then passed in with the *petits chapeaux* to the Artillery School at Fontainebleau in 1873.

During his whole time at the École Polytechnique there had not been a single entertainment of any kind—not even the traditional *point gamma*. No one had the heart for amusement.

MILITARY CAREER

CHAPTER III

MILITARY CAREER

FERDINAND FOCH passed out third from the Artillery School at Fontainebleau, and chose the garrison at Tarbes, his native town, where the 24th Artillery Regiment was stationed.

There is something very typical about the way the young officer thus chose to come back to his own district when so many others have no thought but to be posted to the gayest garrisons and enjoy their first liberty to the full.

Tarbes is famed for its Arab thoroughbreds, and Lieutenant Foch was an excellent horseman. After two years at Tarbes, he went to the Cavalry School at Saumur and passed out fourth. All his life he has been a keen horseman and has always had beautiful mounts.

From Saumur he was posted, in 1878, as Captain to the 10th Artillery Regiment at Rennes. He was then called to the technical section in Paris, and entered the Staff College in 1885, where Ruffey, his old fellow student at the École Polytechnique, had preceded him by several years. He passed out fourth in 1887, spent a probationary period on the staff at Montpellier, became an officer on the Divisional Staff in that same town, and then returned to Paris in February 1891, as Major on the Army Staff. Then at Vincennes he commanded a group of Horse Artillery belonging to the 13th Artillery Regiment, was recalled in 1894 to the Army Staff, and on October 31st, 1895, appointed assistant instructor in military history, strategy, and applied tactics at the Staff College in Paris.

In 1896 he was promoted lieutenant-colonel and appointed chief instructor. The courses he gave very soon gained attention. A military writer, who has written a series of remarkable articles on

our great leaders under the pseudonym of *Miles*, in the *Correspondant*, says :

" The officers attending the Staff College between 1896 and 1901 will never forget the impressions they received from their instructor in strategy and general tactics. This course was the one they all looked forward to with the keenest curiosity, for it was the most important set of lectures in the School. It had gained much from the prestige of many eminent masters, and it is only true to say that the eighty officers on each course came with a keen desire to develop and form their minds, and were only too anxious to get into touch with the chief who was to initiate them into the mysteries of military strategy.

" Lieutenant-Colonel Foch did not disappoint them. Slim, good-looking, with an air of refinement in his well-fitting dolman (a garment of which a deplorable mania for uniformity has since deprived the artillery), one was at once struck by

his look of energy, calmness, rectitude. His forehead was broad, his nose proud and straight, his grey-blue eyes looked one straight in the face. He spoke without gesture, with authority and conviction. His voice was deep, gruff, and a little monotonous. He used long sentences to take in all the detours of a rigorous reasoning. He pushed on the discussion, always appealing to logic, and often even having recourse to mathematical terms. Sometimes he was difficult to follow, for there was such a wealth of ideas in his lectures, but he always held the attention of his hearers by the clear-sightedness of his views and his tone of sincerity. By common consent of his students, Colonel Foch was regarded as the most profound and the most original of all the teachers of the Staff College at that time, and it had then on its staff some of the cleverest brains and most brilliant lecturers of the day. From their first introduction to him they were only too willing to

follow his lessons and share his enthusiasm."

It is these lectures that are reproduced in his great works, *De la conduite de la Guerre* (*On the Conduct of War*), *Manœuvre pour la Bataille* (*Battle Manœuvres*), and *Des Principes de la Guerre* (*Principles of Warfare*).[1]

If one thinks that, from 1895–1901, some hundreds of officers, many of them the pick of the Army Staff, had attended his lectures and been imbued with his ideas, and that at the beginning of the war they were practically all of high rank, one may get some notion of the vast echoes awakened by one great mind.

Politics, unfortunately, put an end to his instructional career for a little time. In 1900, General Bonnal succeeded General Langlois as commandant of the Staff College. These were the troublous times of great doctrinal controversy and petty religious restrictions. General Foch

[1] Published by Berger-Levrault, Paris.

is a Catholic; one of his brothers belongs to an order of Jesuits. That was quite enough to make his position difficult at a time when strong passions were unloosed, and politics, by a fatal error of certain persons, allowed to penetrate into the army.

Lieutenant-Colonel Foch left the Staff College and joined the 29th Artillery Regiment at Laon.

In 1903 he was appointed Chief of Staff to the 5th Corps at Orleans.

On June 20th, 1907, he was promoted Brigadier-General, just two years after his old fellow-student, General Ruffey. He was posted to the General Army Staff in Paris.

M. Georges Clemenceau had just become President of the Council. The authorities were on the outlook for a successor to General Bonnal as head of the Staff College. They were unanimous in their choice of General Foch.

M. Clemenceau sent for him and said :

"I offer you the command of the Staff College."

"Thank you," said the General, "but you are doubtless unaware that one of my brothers is a Jesuit——"

"I know that, but I don't care a ——. You will make good officers ; that is the only thing that matters."

This little interview does honour to both speakers.

They were destined to come across each other later on and work together with equal frankness and equal confidence.

And so the interrupted educational work was resumed. General Foch very rightly regarded the higher branches of military science as indispensable in the higher commands. He found the packed two-year programme insufficient, and asked and obtained permission to model his syllabus on that of the *Kriegsakademie* in Berlin, letting the senior officers have a third year at the School. The number of officers grew to fifteen. This was what was known as the "School

for Marshals." It unfortunately only survived a year, for loud were the jealousies and protestations roused. Among the students on this famous Marshal's course was Captain Weygand, now a Divisional General and General Foch's most trusty ally.

In 1911, General Foch was made a Divisional General by M. Millerand. He left the Staff College and took over the command of the 13th Division at Chaumont. On December 17th, 1912, he was placed at the head of the 8th Army Corps at Bourges; and on August 23rd, 1913, he, as we have already said, took over the command of the 20th Army Corps at Nancy.

THE COMMAND OF THE 20TH ARMY CORPS

CHAPTER IV

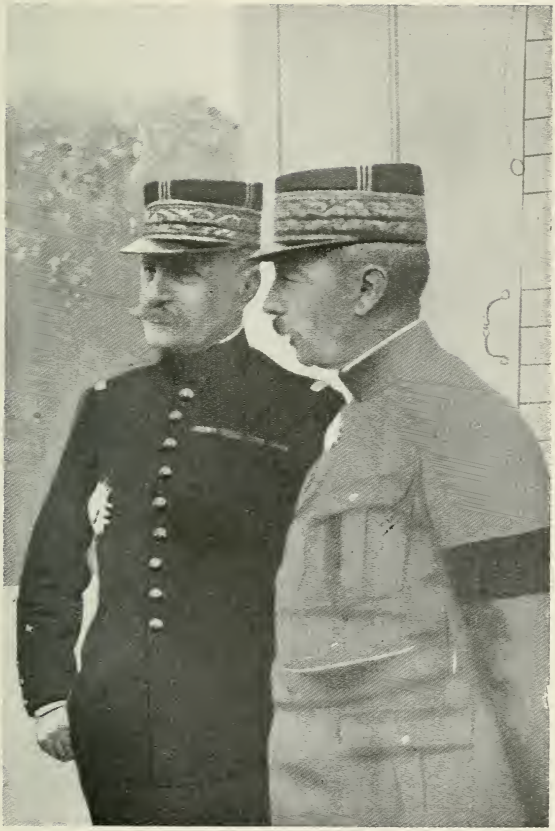
THE COMMAND OF THE 20TH ARMY CORPS

General Foch was entrusted with the command of the 20th Corps just when the threatening war-clouds were gathering over Europe. The Balkan crisis had roused so many immoderate desires that it was almost bound to be but the first spark in a general conflagration. Since 1912 Germany had flung discretion to the winds and embarked on an unbridled programme of armaments, the extent of which could be judged from the enormous armaments tax levied on the German people. To counterbalance this, France, under the enthusiastic lead of M. Barthon, with the unqualified support of M. André Tardieu in the *Temps* and in public

speeches, had passed the Three Years' Military Service Act.

With a very clear idea of the imminence of danger, General Foch had worked hard to get Nancy adequately fortified. But all the same he did not foresee, any more than the Government or the French Army Staff, all the terrible consequences that the assassination of the Austrian Archduke at Serajevo on June 28th, 1914, was going to have, thanks to Austrian and German aggression.

In the first days of July 1914 he took part in the usual peace-time programme of divisional manœuvres. We have a remarkable portrait of the general at this time given by a young officer, since fallen on the field of honour, Captain André Dubarle. André Dubarle, who had entered the Staff College seventh, was at that time with a regiment of hussars in Nancy. General Foch was taking part in the manœuvres along with General de Castelnau. Here is what Dubarle says :



MARSHAL FOCH AND GENERAL WIRBEL.

"Humbeauville, July 5th, 1914.

"My dear Father and Mother,

"Here we are nearly at the end of our camping period. The day after to-morrow we shall be on the road, and on Saturday we shall be in Nancy. We have just been having a good time manœuvring with the 11th Division—'the iron division of Nancy,' as it is called. General de Castelnau, inspecting the 20th Corps, and General Foch, commanding the 20th Army Corps, took part in the manœuvres. The presence of these two great men and their criticism made things very interesting.

"General Foch was once commandant of the Staff College, and a most outstanding chief he was. He is still quite a young man, thin and supple, and looks slightly fragile; indeed, his head almost looks like a flower that is too big for its delicate stalk. What strikes one first is his bright, penetrating glance, full of intelligence, but, in spite of great energy, still *luminous*. This luminosity—there

is no other word for it—quite spiritualises a face that otherwise would be almost brutal, with its great moustache and protruding jaw. When he speaks, drawing lessons from the manœuvres, he gets extraordinarily animated, almost passionate, and yet never fails to express himself with simplicity and purity. His language is sober, direct ; he points out the principles of warfare, condemns faults, makes an appeal to one's best energies, all in the same brief and contained style.

"He is a priest who judges, condemns, and teaches in the name of a dogma that inspires him, and to which he has devoted all the strength of his brain and his heart. General Foch is a prophet inspired by his god.

"You can well understand that criticism from such a man was full of interest."

After these manœuvres, France still having no idea of the plans of aggression being concocted between Berlin and

Vienna, General Foch, on July 18th, 1914, asked for and was granted a fortnight's leave to go to his estate near Morlaix in Brittany, where his family usually spent their holidays. His two sons-in-law, Captain Fournier of the Army Staff (with seventeen days' leave), and Captain Becourt, commanding a company of the 26th Battalion of *Chasseurs à pied* at Pont-à-Mousson (with twenty-five days' leave), joined him there with their wives and children.

These details form a most illuminating refutation of the German falsehoods that France wanted war and was preparing for it. If France had wanted war, leave would never have been granted towards the end of July to three such important officers, and especially not to the Commandant of the 20th Corps at Nancy, which bore the first shock of the German onslaught.

Austria's monstrous ultimatum to Serbia on July 23rd, and, above all, the sudden breaking off of diplomatic relations

between Vienna and Belgrade, in spite of Serbia's conciliatory reply on July 25th, were needed to open France's eyes. It was quite obvious now that the Central Powers wanted war. General Foch was recalled on July 26th, and his two sons-in-law on the 27th.

The hour of the German thrust was at hand. Practice was going to take the place of theory.

THE CHIEF'S PHILOSOPHY OF WAR

CHAPTER V

THE CHIEF'S PHILOSOPHY OF WAR

In these first days of war, General Foch's whole teaching at the Staff College was, as it were, crystallised in his brain. He recalled the class-rooms where he had lectured before all these many youths who were now commanding units. French teaching must triumph. What was this teaching ?

In memoriam, in spem (in memory and in hope), were the concluding words of the preface of that admirable work of his, *De la Conduite de la Guerre.* It has been the motto of his whole life.

If (so he reasoned) the Germans beat us in 1870, we must look for the causes ; we must divine the secret of their victory or of our own weakness. We must go

back to the great Napoleonic period and discover some guiding principle, itself French, conforming with the French turn of mind and the French temperament. From this persistent searching one ruling idea seemed to flash forth: force without a quickening spirit is vain force. The greatness of France lies in her intellectual genius. And so General Foch used to say to his young students at the beginning of his famous course on military tactics: "Later on you will be asked to be the brain of an army. I tell you to-day: Learn to think."

For him the management of great units was not a simple question of easy organisation, of carefully established plans, of strategic and tactical intelligence; it was a problem of almost moral calibre.

FOCH AND LUDENDORFF

In the present struggle between Ludendorff and Foch, we have on the one side

a redoubtable mathematician and on the other a great genius.

M. de Pouvourville has given us the following portrait of Ludendorff :

" Ludendorff is the typical staff officer, the typical logarithmic strategist, the typical chess-player—cold and inexorable. I scarcely knew him, and hardly any one did, for he never wanted to be seen or talked to. I have a clear remembrance, however, of an angular profile, a disquieting, searching eye, a cold, austere face, distinctly marred by his short bushy moustache and the great folds of flesh at his neck, emphasised by the exaggerated stiffness of his gorget. He imagined himself, and certainly was, a puzzle. But at the time I knew him he was always accompanied by a certain Captain von Spitz, a Prussian from Stettin, who used to copy (and unconsciously ridicule) the mannerisms of his master, but who, as he needed two bottles of stout to make him sleep, used to be-

come slightly loquacious in the evening. It was *via* von Spitz (who died of delirium tremens at Heiden on Lake Constance) that one could occasionally to some little extent decipher Ludendorff.

"To have control of men and of affairs, to hold secret sway over the army, to direct all matters pertaining to war without appearing to do so—such was Ludendorff's ambition. To-day that ambition has been realised through Hindenburg. That great blustering marshal of the Mazurian Lakes goes round the country speechifying, putting in an appearance everywhere, bursting with importance, covering Germany with his enormous shadow. In this shadow, silent and ruthless, Ludendorff goes about his business.

"From his obscurity he works the Teutonic generalissimo like a huge puppet, hiding his own personality. He sends him to banquets, to imperial councils, to the Front; and all this time he himself sits at home in his solitary private office,

bent over his calculations, moving the pieces on his chess-board and forcing the destiny of the war. That is Ludendorff's game. He is full of an all-devouring ambition, that goes straight to the point and despises the noise and futility of fame.

"His characteristic mode of warfare is unique. It might be termed 'irony in practice.' To conquer his enemy by brute force has always seemed to him an inferior and easy way of working, good enough for his commander-in-chief and his sovereign; and inasmuch as they have been content with it he has most assuredly despised them in his heart of hearts. The interesting and important part of warfare is to play practical jokes on your adversary, to deceive him thoroughly and prepare clever traps for him to fall into with his own stupid enthusiasm. And this principle is applied not only to military strategy. Austerlitz and Auerstadt were obviously 'practical jokes,' but they were

scarcely laughable, or even mildly amusing, and they would not have done for Ludendorff, who wants to get some fun out of his enemies. No. Ludendorff is a skilled player who sees his chance and uses it, and who with the same skill as he practises military strategy and sheds blood, practises diplomatic and moral strategy and sheds lies and poisoned words.

"There we have his curious characteristic. Everything is fair game to him. Spying in war-time, anarchist propaganda in the East, defeatist propaganda in the West, millions of suspicious banks, libels and treason, pacifist pamphlets, missions composed of the most rascally men and the most gushing women, traders in discouragement, fomenters of troubles in neutral countries, —everything originates in Ludendorff's office and in Ludendorff's brain, and everything comes back to him again."

Personally I have not met General

Ludendorff, but I have carefully studied all the photographs of him shed broadcast over the country by his German admirers. One thing strikes me particularly—his sneering mouth. His upper lip curls with an expression of immense disdain. There is unutterable vanity in the coldness of his face. This man certainly has no inner and shining light. He is without goodness, without pity, without ideals. He cares for nothing but the pleasure of having the upper hand and riding rough-shod over any one who opposes his plans.

Very different is General Foch. He is no autocrat, bent on holding in his own hands all the wires of a complicated mechanism or making of his office a vast electric station with hundreds of handles on his switchboard of death and intrigue. All General Foch's strength is concentrated in his brain.

He has an analytical genius closely allying him with those great French brains of the past—Berthelot, Renan,

Pasteur. He has a military knowledge which makes him direct heir of the personal tradition of Napoleon Bonaparte. He takes refuge in meditation when grave problems are at stake. He studies them with the whole power of his mind and his heart, with the express desire to find the most complete and the most humane solution. There is nothing Machiavellian about his reasoning, nothing tortuous, nothing hasty, nothing brutal. His decisions are always simple, and easily understood by those who have to work them out. To quote his own words : [1]

" Really and truly ' to command ' has never meant ' to be mysterious,' but to let at any rate one's immediate subordinates understand the thought underlying the order.

" If any one ever might have been

[1] The quotations which follow are from his two works, *De la Conduite de la Guerre* and *Des Principes de la Guerre* (published Berger-Levrault, Paris).

allowed to be mysterious it was Napoleon, whose authority was uncontested, and who assumed the task of thinking and deciding for his whole army. Yet from his correspondence one gathers that he explained his views to his Army Corps commanders and showed them his programme for several days ahead. If we recall numberless examples of his proclamations, we will find that his troops were initiated into the secret of the pending operations. As Souvarov has said, 'Each soldier must know what he has to do; for I am convinced that one gains everything from troops that have been told, because then they know what is demanded of them and ask nothing better than to give it.'"

And does this other quotation from General Foch, referring to Moltke in 1870, not equally well apply to Ludendorff, who has inherited the traditions of the German Staff?

"Moltke is obviously nothing but a Chief of Staff; but what is perhaps less obvious but equally true, is that his activity never goes beyond the intellectual limits of his Staff work. If by a constant appeal to the faculties and functions of the mind, and particularly to logic and calculation, he manages to contrive some plan of operations, he immediately rushes to put it on paper, in the Orders of the Day, in the most concise and laconic style, so as to have it properly understood and carried into effect by his subordinates. There his active direction ends. The German armies stand in sad need of a leader at their head who would strive by his own impulse and by effectively enthusing those under him—seniors, subalterns, or privates—to have his own plans carried out; and who, when the time came, would take into his own hands the conduct of that unique and decisive argument of war—the direction of battle. It was because he lacked this faculty of commanding

that Moltke was obliged to carry on his attack on the Sarre till August 18th, and then fail—not because of the enemy, but because of his own subordinates.

"Napoleon himself said: 'As a general rule, the commander-in-chief should only indicate the general direction of attack and the points to be aimed at. As for the means to be employed, these ought to be left to the free choice of the executive organs; otherwise success is impossible."

FRENCH AND GERMAN IDEAS CONTRASTED

We have seen the difference in mentality, so far as the chief's rôle is concerned, between the two adversaries now face to face. The one leader keeps everything in his own hands, jealously guards the secret of his plan of action, and is content to press buttons to set the huge machine in motion. The other concentrates all his mental faculties on the problem in hand, and, once a solution has been found, communicates his

ideas to those who have to carry them out.

But there is more than this. The mathematical German mind hammers things out logically, and gives his enemy credit for the same rigorous train of reasoning. The examination of a problem is based on logic and not on imagination. That of course is quite characteristic of the German turn of mind, which is devoid of all imagination.

In one of his lessons at the Staff College, when he was dealing with the German army's advance towards the Moselle at the beginning of August 1870, General Foch used to show how Moltke studied the position of the French army, not from information received, but from the general situation, and the solution that the French *must necessarily have* adopted.

"Unfortunately for this mode of working," said General Foch, "these conjectures and these reasoned hypotheses do not always quite coincide with

the reality of things, which is quite often improbable, born of causes incomprehensible or inexplicable. If Moltke had been a man of action to a higher degree than he was, he would have taken wider count of human factors and their very variable effects ; he would have striven to base his plans on the truth, which he had sought for and found.

" His method of reasoning, his treatment of the unknown, have made a school for themselves in the Prussian army. Von der Goltz himself says : ' Are not the rational dispositions of the enemy the most solid bases we could have for our plans of action ? ' Yet surely the history of Napoleon, the most clear-sighted and far-seeing of leaders (especially in 1806) answers ' No,' and shows the great chief advancing only where he has a light to guide his feet, advancing surely because he takes care to have that light always.

" On August 9th, on the other hand,

Moltke's operations rested on a preconceived idea, without foundation, without sure premises."

After having pointed out the consequences of this mode of reasoning and how it would certainly have led to a German defeat had the French command in 1870 been different, General Foch concludes :

" If we compare these plans and the way they were carried out with the idea and the disposal of forces underlying a Napoleonic manœuvre—1806 for example —we shall find that we have in the latter no preconceived notions, no hard and fast hypotheses. The one aim is constantly to seek out the enemy and strike with the whole mass of troops, whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. For this, one must have forces mobile enough to guarantee that in any circumstance the attacking army will remain articulate in several directions at once ;

and that it will be possible to alter the direction of attack at any moment as a result of some piece of intelligence, and in spite of the enemy, because safety is assured, whatever happens. Everything is reserved up to the very last instant ; there is no leap in the dark ; there is no danger of being surprised ; one avoids the impossibility of attacking in good condition. And so the operations, conducted with an eye always on the enemy, have more certain, though possibly unforeseen, results. They proceed on more varying, more numerous, more fruitful lines. The higher command never lets go the reins, and can intervene at the psychological moment."

Moltke's mistaken ideas in the advance to the Moselle were not an accident ; they were the result of a doctrine which, happily for France, is still perpetuated among the German Staff.

Everything in Germany is system, and is perpetually starting all over again on

the same lines as before. If General Alvensleben at Gravelotte had not, by his own personal tactics, repaired the error of Moltke's General Headquarters, the battle would have been lost. There again the generalissimo tried to reason in the absolute.

"It is always," says General Foch, "the same conception of military operations. At the basis we have an hypothesis on the enemy, resting on what is supposed to be rational conduct for him—here the precipitate retreat towards the Argonne. This hypothesis is followed to its complete logical conclusion, even to the extent of deciding what point the enemy will have arrived at in the carrying out of his programme—here the adversary 'was to be supposed to have an advance of two days.' Without taking into any account the troops that Rheinhaben reported on the 15th, on the Rezonville road, their camp fires having been seen at night to the west of Metz, the authorities

had become such slaves to their own hypothesis that they proceeded with the operations depending on it, to the extent of making any other action impossible."

The strength of Germany has, up till now, lain in the enormous number of her effectives and in the perfect organisation of the mechanism which sets them in motion. Her weakness consists in the absolute autocracy of General Headquarters, and in their habit of planning military operations as an architect plans a house, and being quite unable to modify them if something breaks down.

"To get information and then to act" —all General Foch's teaching lies in that, in direct opposition to the German doctrine.

In his lectures at the Staff College he returns time and again to this vicious German system.

"We have," he says, "repeatedly railed against this method of conducting

war on preconceived ideas and decisions based on hypothesis.

"A German military writer, Fritz Hoenig, says of Moltke: 'General von Moltke represented a school, and indeed that school was himself.'

"As such, he considered what the enemy ought to or could do from the point of view of this school. The principle of the school was to suppose that in the measures taken by the enemy he would do what would bring him greatest advantage, and at that moment Moltke could not think that Bazaine was impelled by political motives. In approaching Metz to wait for the impending crisis, the French were exposing themselves to all the strategical inconveniences following on this movement; that Bazaine could possibly act in this way seemed almost inconceivable to a great strategist like Moltke."

"Not to mention the gifts inherent in the individual at all, it is a case of

the school of reality, duly sought for and recognised, as opposed to the school of hypothesis."

"As for our own moral, we are bound to conclude that we shall never have truth unless we seek for it ourselves, and that we shall never have it absolutely *true* without paying the price. Without this search, there is nothing but error, even for the Moltkes and the Frederick-Charles's."

"But it is not sufficient in commanding armies to have ideas and make plans."

"This inability of General Headquarters to turn their undoubted numerical superiority into an irresistible effort and ensure victory; this obligation they were under to entrust the actual execution of the war to subordinates—these, let us say it once more, are the

condemnation of the system of command by directives."

From these few extracts from General Foch's lectures it appears clearly that, given equal forces naturally, French quickness of imagination and French mobility must win the victory over the stilted German mode of reasoning, which is of mathematical rather than of spiritual order.

THE VIRTUES OF THE COMMANDER

We have seen how, at the beginning of his courses, General Foch used to ask the young officers who were preparing for Staff work only to learn to think.

The military science that they were going to acquire was not to be so much useless baggage of historical facts and figures, but a treasury of examples to use when occasion required.

"The reality of the battlefield," he used to say to them, "is that there is

no time for study there. One simply does what one can to apply one's knowledge; and, therefore, to be any use at all, one must know a lot and know it well."

And then he used to quote them the famous saying of Verdy of Vernois when he arrived on the battlefield of Nachod: "To the devil with history and principles! After all, what is it we've got to do?"

"Immediately his mind was fixed. That is the objective way of treating the subject. One approaches a plan of action by its object, in the widest sense of the term—what is our object, what have we got to do?"

The first virtue of a commander, then, is intelligence and a critical sense. He must first of all understand.

The second is the acceptance of responsibility.

"When the time comes to make decisions, to incur responsibilities, to

make sacrifices (and these decisions must be made before they are imposed; these responsibilities must be wooed before they are thrust on one, for one must always make sure of the initiative, and take the offensive at every point), where are the workers for these risky and perilous enterprises to be found if not among the higher natures, greedy of responsibility? Where, if not among those who are profoundly imbued with the will to win, and find in that will and in the clear vision of the only means that lead to Victory, the power to exercise unhesitatingly their most formidable rights, the power to face calmly the time of difficulties and sacrifice, the power to risk all, even honour (for a general beaten is a chief disqualified)?"

"There are circumstances in which a general ought to be led only by his own conscience, and to know how to act on his own responsibility, even in opposition to orders."

Even Napoleon knew these fits of anxiety when it came to making a decision, and he writes in his *Memoirs* :

"People have but slight idea of the strength of mind needed, after one has thoroughly considered the consequences, to launch one of these great battles on which the history of an army and a country or the possession of a throne depend. And so it is rare to find generals who will willingly engage the enemy in battle."

In order to be equal to the task, General Foch appeals to moral forces :

"In these days of ours, when we think we can do without an ideal, reject what we call the abstractions and live on realism, rationalism, positivism, reducing everything to questions of knowledge or the use of expedients, more or less ingenious, manufactured for the occasion, we have not yet found any

way of avoiding error, mistake, and disaster, and fixing the tactics to be carried out on a certain day, except—and this exception is safe and fruitful—in the exclusive cult of two abstractions belonging to the moral domain : duty and discipline. Moreover, in order to produce the happiest results, this cult demands knowledge and thought."

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE COMMANDER

In demanding from his leaders these high moral virtues, General Foch's aim is not merely to elevate their own character so that they may justify this other favourite axiom of his :

"Victory always goes to those who deserve it by possessing the greatest power of will and intelligence."

What he wants as well, is that the troops should know the value of those who command them.

"No matter how high the commander is placed, his first task must always be to give orders ; but his second, and it is equally important, is to see that they are carried out. It is on the battlefield that a battle is fought. The soldier must actually see his chief, must feel that he is in constant touch with him, and on no account must he be allowed to think that he is merely a pawn in the hands of an unseen player.

"Surely it is in the influence of the commanding officer and in the enthusiasm transmitted by him to his troops that we must look for the explanation of those unconscious movements of that great mass of humanity, which is the army. Only thus can we explain why in certain solemn moments on the field of battle a whole army, without knowing why, feels itself carried forward as if it were gliding down an inclined plane."

The chief must have the gift of command.

"Thinking and willing—mind and character—are not enough. He must have the gift of transmitting the supreme energy animating him to the masses of men which are his weapon, for the army is to the commander-in-chief what the sword is to the soldier. It is of no value apart from his guiding power."

With a great commander, the French soldier is the finest soldier in the world.

"We have," said General Foch some years ago, "a soldier incontestably superior to his comrade beyond the Vosges, by virtue of his racial qualities: activity, intelligence, dash, responsiveness, devotion to duty, patriotic fervour."

Well did he know those he was to lead to victory! He knew what to expect of them and what to make of them. He knew how to produce good officers and good men—capacity on the one hand and loyalty on the other

THE WILL TO WIN

This aphorism of Joseph de Maistre's : " A lost battle is a battle one thinks one has lost, for a battle can never be really materially lost," has often been quoted.

In his book on the *Principles of Warfare*, General Foch, commenting on this famous saying, adds :

" So it is morally that it is lost. But then, it is morally, too, that it is won, and we could prolong the aphorism by saying : ' A battle gained is a battle in which one will not confess oneself beaten.'

" Victory equals will."

General Bugeaud of old exclaimed : " O, moral power, you are the queen of armies ! "

In General Foch's work there are whole pages given up to examples of the will to win giving victory.

Why was it that round Metz on August 16th, 18th, and 31st, 1870, the French army was beaten in spite of its heroism? It was because their leader did not desire victory with all his heart and soul.

"The great events of history, the great disasters that certain of its pages record, such as the downfall of France in 1870, are never accidents. They are definitely the result of higher and more general causes, which are forgetfulness of the commonest moral and intellectual virtues, and neglect of spiritual and physical activity, which after all constitute the life and health of our armies."

THE WAY TO WIN

It would be impossible to analyse here General Foch's strategic and tactical ideas. It is an unlimited subject. By a minute study of the Napoleonic Wars and all the wars that have followed them, he has discovered that there were

great principles underlying them, but not immutable doctrines.

"In war, with Staff problems, as with any other, there can be no fixed rule."

"The rules and natural principles of the art of warfare are a well-balanced plan, an exact conception of the means at one's disposal, resistance of difficulties.

"Napoleon himself used to say that he had never had a plan of operations, but that he had his plan of war, his final goal. He went forward, fixing, as and when circumstances permitted, his means of approaching and attaining that goal."

"The generals who have come through the French Revolution are ignorant of all this science of geographical points which is so foreign to true warfare, which is the very negation of battle, and the sign of decadence, which is 'the

end of the end which is the end of ends.' They have but one aim, one desire, and that an incontestably real one—to beat the enemy."

"In war it is true that there are other things besides principles : there are time, places, distances, the condition of the ground; and there is always the odd chance over which one has no control. But one cannot violate principles with impunity. Fortune soon grows weary and the mind resumes its sway over matter and chance."

"It is not enough to make plans; they are not workable unless one takes into account the obstacles the enemy may put in the way."

"The art of warfare does not consist entirely, so far as officers of high rank and vanguard leaders are concerned, in charging the enemy like a herd of swine."

"Far from being a grand total of distinct and favourable results, victory is the outcome of a series of efforts, some of them successful, some apparently unfruitful, all nevertheless converging to the same end, all tending to the same result: the decision or the dénouement which alone will give victory."

"Napoleon knew very well that a serious enemy was not to be demoralised or overthrown by shallow formations, skirmishers, single lines of troops, or even by a general attack. To get the better of him and make him confess himself beaten, an unparalleled effort was demanded of the whole mass of troops."

"Napoleon says that in order to be victorious it is necessary, and it is sufficient, to be the strongest at a given point at a given time."

"Reserves are stores of forces on which we draw to make up for the

wastage that takes place. The art consists in still having some when the enemy has none."

Is there any need to comment on these quotations? Are their very simplicity and their lapidary style not enough to give us some conception of the brain-work of the man who thought them out? They are essentially French ideas—clear, logical, full of common sense, modesty, and faith. How far removed we feel from the Wagnerian jingle of golden armours and fiery swords, from the lyrical pathos and noisy sentimentality, or even from the implacable mathematical and scientific reasoning of the land beyond the Rhine!

It is the struggle of mind against matter.

APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES—THE BATTLE OF LORRAINE

CHAPTER VI

APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES—THE BATTLE OF LORRAINE

THE 20th Army Corps was perhaps the finest Army Corps command in the whole French Army. Nancy is the head-quarters of the 11th Division—the Iron Division; Toul the head-quarters of the 39th Division—the Steel Division. Nancy seemed before the war to be the undefendable town against which the enemy would certainly launch his attack. In fact, this seemed so certain that public opinion had been more or less prepared for the fall of Nancy.

General Foch was not one of those who so readily accepted seeing the town in the hands of the invader. He had made up his mind to defend it.

He was supported in this opinion by the French Staff, who had entrusted General Castelnau with the command of the 2nd Lorraine Army, of which the 20th Corps was part. As the " best way to defend is to attack," the Lorraine Army immediately launched an offensive to relieve the pressure on Nancy, and took the initiative by breaking the German offensive effort at the outset.

Without desiring to enter here into an exhaustive account of the German plan of campaign against France in August 1914, we may perhaps be permitted to give a general survey of affairs.

According to the ideas of von Schlieffen, Chief of the General Staff, and von Moltke's predecessor, the battle front was to be inordinately long. One of the wings was to pass through Belgium, the other was to attack from Metz and Strasburg. The two were to attempt to encircle the French army, and when that was done the centre would give the final blow, the final knock in the stomach. We know

how General Joffre lured von Kluck's right wing to the Marne and made a flank attack with Maunoury's Army. What is less well known is what happened to the other wing on the Lorraine front. It was there that the German left wing, starting from Metz and Strasburg, was to attack the French right flank and break through our line between Nancy and Épinal. If the line had been broken, the Germans would have found themselves at the back of the chief body of French troops whom General Joffre was going to withdraw to the Marne after the battles in Belgium. To allow him to retire to the Marne, it was therefore imperative that the French right wing, the Lorraine Army, should form an impenetrable wall. This task was admirably fulfilled by the 1st and 2nd French Armies, commanded by Generals Dubail and Castelnau.

It is in these battles in Lorraine that we find General Foch at work at the beginning of the campaign.

He commanded, as we have already said, the 20th Lorraine Corps, the finest Army Corps in the whole French Army. This again was under General Castelnau, commanding the 2nd Army. This 2nd Army covered Nancy, facing Metz and Château-Salins, and was opposite the army of the Crown Prince of Bavaria.

As soon as war was declared, the 20th Corps strengthened all the defences of the Grand-Couronné de Nancy, and then marched towards the frontier in the direction of Château-Salins. On August 17th they entered the town, and took possession of the River Seille, from Marsol to Chambrey. The 4th Battalion of light infantry pressed on and took Haupont and Habondange ; by the evening of the 19th, the 20th Corps occupied the whole zone to the east and north of the Forest of Château-Salins. They were also covering the French Army Corps operating to the south against any counter-attack from the Metz direction, and they were destined to be the

hinge on which the whole movement hung.

Quite what happened at the battle of Morhange and Dieuze, which took place on the 20th and obliged the French armies in Lorraine to fall back, has not yet been made sufficiently clear historically, and this is not the place to discuss the question. All we have set out to do is to follow the 20th Corps and its leader.

In obedience to orders received from General Castelnau, they had advanced, the 39th Division to the attack of the heights of Marthil-Baronvilliers, and the 11th to Conthil, and so via Rodable on to the plain near Bensdorf. It was a formidable attack, and the 26th Infantry Regiment, belonging to the 11th Division, was able to take back seventeen wagons of ammunition captured from the enemy, thirty-four horses, the baggage belonging to the colonel of the 137th German regiment (21st Corps, 31st Division), and 115 prisoners, including three officers.

It was in this heroic offensive that Lieutenant de Castelnau, one of the General's sons, and Lieutenant Guy de Cassagnac fell. Was there slackness in any of the divisions of the neighbouring army? Whatever was the cause, the fact remains that the two Lorraine Armies had to abandon their offensive programme against the Metz-Sarrburg line and fall back on the Meurthe.

The 22nd Brigade of the 11th Division (General Ferry) occupied the heights of Flainval and held up the enemy throughout the whole of August 22nd, thus preventing him from crossing the Meurthe and turning the Grand-Couronné to the south.

The 4th Battalion of *chasseurs* had taken up their position on the Rembêtant, the southern spur of the Grand-Couronné, and the main part of the 20th Corps had established themselves to the south of the Meurthe, on the heights of Ville-en-Vernois-Manoncourt and the ridge east of Rosières. General

Foch's disposition of his troops thus enabled him to proceed either to the defence of the Grand-Couronné, if the enemy launched an attack on Nancy, or to the defence of the Trouée de Charmes, should the Bavarians press southwards.

The 39th Division of the 20th Corps had been sent out to rest at Lapcourt-Manoncourt. The artillery kept the Sanon valley under fire, their batteries being stationed on the crest of the Saint-Nicolas-Cuite-Fêve ridge. They were supported by a brigade of the 11th Division and by the heroic 4th Battalion of light infantry, who held the Saint-Nicolas bridge on which the communications of the whole army depended.

No disposition of troops could have been conceived in a more perfect manner. Despite the hasty retreat the two armies were compelled to make, General Foch had, as far as his share was concerned, made a most sound survey of the position and found the solution of the defensive problem which had so suddenly arisen.

The enemy gloated over the retreat of the French army in Lorraine in his usual dithyrambic style. He already saw his left wing carrying out the great movement planned by the General Staff. The French fortresses in the east were going to be overthrown, and the German troops were to fall in at the back of the French armies then fighting in Belgium. But that was setting rather a low price on the abilities of the French Higher Command. The Lorraine Army had withdrawn because of an executive difficulty, but they were still intact, and were going to prove it.

The Germans, intoxicated by their success, were marching south towards Lunéville, and in crossing the Grand-Couronné de Nancy, presented their flank to the 20th Corps and the other units of Castelnau's Army. On August 24th, when the enemy was sufficiently engaged on his southward march and in a frontal attack on Dubail's Army, the order was given at half-past eleven in the morning to the greater part

of the 20th Corps to vacate their position on the Grand-Couronné and launch an attack. The enemy was held.

On the next day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, General Castelnau telegraphed from General Headquarters that an advance was to be made on the whole Lorraine front to the greatest depth possible. The 20th Corps flung themselves against the heights of Flainval and Hudiviller, and one of the divisions captured the Crevic wood after a stubborn fight, and routed the 3rd Division of the 2nd Bavarian Corps to the north of Maixe. By the evening, the French had possession of the heights of Sommerviller, Flainval, and Hudiviller. The Nancy garrison took up its position on the Champenoux front, and the enemy at every point was either checked or in flight.

On the 26th, by the end of the day, the 20th Corps had gained the line La Faisanderie—Friscati—Deuxille—Maixe Crevic wood.

The defeat of the German armies in Lorraine had dealt a death-blow to the German plan of operations. Monsieur Gabriel Hanotaux, in his *History of the War*, 1914, says that a German telegram was intercepted on August 27th, bearing more or less this message: "On no account whatever let our armies in the west" (*i.e.* the right wing in Belgium) "know of the check to our armies in the east" (the left wing in Lorraine).

As a matter of fact, this meant the complete failure of the whole original plan. One of the wings being blocked, put the whole machine out of action.

Even if the great mass of the public failed to realise, in default of information, the importance of the fighting in Lorraine, General Joffre himself had a very clear vision of its results.

On August 27th the following appeared in the Orders of the Day for the other Armies:

"The First and Second Armies are at

this moment giving an example of tenacity and courage which the Commander-in-Chief is happy to bring to the knowledge of the troops under his orders.

" Independently of the covering corps, some of whom have fought since the opening of hostilities, these two armies conducted a general offensive, and obtained brilliant successes until they found themselves confronted by a barrier fortified and defended by far superior forces.

" After a perfectly well-ordered retreat, the two armies have renewed the offensive on a combined plan, and have regained a large part of the ground previously lost.

" The enemy is bending before them, and his retirement has made it possible to ascertain the very considerable losses he has suffered.

" These armies have been fighting for fourteen days without an instant's respite, with an unshakable confidence in victory. Victory always belongs to the most tenacious.

" The Commander-in-Chief knows that

the other armies will set their minds to follow the example furnished by the First and Second Armies.

"JOFFRE,
"*General Commanding-in-Chief.*"

The point of supreme importance for the French Higher Command was that the two Lorraine Armies should protect on their right the whole movement of the Army retiring from Belgium to take up their station on the Marne. It was most necessary that the resistance which had been so victoriously manifested on August 25th and 26th should continue till the reconcentration on the Marne was an accomplished fact. General Joffre's instructions on August 28th were to this effect: "What the First and Second Armies must do is to hang on (*durer*), holding the enemy forces opposed to them and retaining contact with each other."

This task was fulfilled by the 1st and 2nd Armies, and in spite of all the

German attempts from August 28th to September 9th, first by La Mortagne, then by a frontal attack on the Grand-Couronné, and then by Saint-Mihiel, they maintained the barrier behind which the battle of the Marne was preparing.

But the Generalissimo was no longer anxious. The Lorraine Army had proved itself. His whole mind was now concentrated on the preparations for the formidable counter-attack on the Marne. He had to have assistants of the first order for this most difficult enterprise, and he appealed to Foch. The 20th Corps was given to General Balfourier, and General Foch was entrusted with the Army which was to occupy the centre of the line, from Sézanne to Mailly.

On August 29th he relinquished the command of the 20th Corps, after having seen one of his regiments, the 69th, carry off the Friscati signal with magnificent dash.

GENERAL FOCH TAKES COMMAND OF THE 9TH ARMY

CHAPTER VII

GENERAL FOCH TAKES COMMAND OF THE 9TH ARMY

On his arrival at Châlons on August 29th, 1914, whither he had been summoned by the Generalissimo to take command of a new Army, General Foch found himself confronted with an extremely difficult problem. General Joffre gave him command of the 9th and 11th Corps, the 42nd Regular Division of infantry, and the 52nd and 60th Reserve Divisions; also the 9th Cavalry Division and the Maroccan Division. The major part of these troops belonged to the 4th Army under General de Langle de Cary, and were in retreat. The 42nd Division was removed from the 6th Corps under

General Sarrail, and, finally, two brigades of the 9th Corps, the 34th and the 35th, were about to arrive from the Lorraine front, where they had been serving under General de Castelnau. It was an amalgam of forces of whose fighting capacity, wear and tear, and manners and morals in general, General Foch was entirely ignorant.

The 9th Corps belonging to Tours, composed of Angevins and Vendeans and commanded by General Dubois, had, in the original plan of concentration, its place in the 2nd Army, of which Nancy was the centre.

They were concentrated on August 10th in the region of Pont-Saint-Vincent, between Toul and Nancy. On the 11th they started to march to Nancy, but the invasion of Belgium having modified the plans of concentration, troops belonging to the 9th Corps were removed on August 18th and sent to lengthen out the left wing under General de Langle de Cary (4th Army).

The portion of the 9th Corps that was thus transferred to the Ardennes comprised the 33rd Brigade and its artillery, the 36th Brigade of the 18th Division and its artillery, the whole forming a temporary 17th Division. These troops had arrived on the morning of the 20th in the region of Charleville.

The 9th Corps was completed by the wonderful Maroccan Division (General Humbert) on August 22nd.

The 9th Corps took part in the campaign in Belgium, saw some very hard fighting, and had to fall back on the Meuse.

The 11th Brittany Corps, composed of Vendeans and Bretons, was under the command of General Eydoux. They had gone through the same campaign in Belgium as the 9th Corps. So also had the 52nd Reserve Division (General Coquet), the 60th Reserve Division (General Joppé), and the 9th Cavalry Division (General de l'Espée).

The 42nd Division had been part of

the 6th Corps, and belonged to the 3rd Army under General Ruffey, one of General Foch's old fellow-students at the École Polytechnique. General Ruffey had as Chief of Staff General Grossetti, whom we shall find later at the head of the 42nd Division.

The 42nd Division had fought in the Battle of the Ardennes, and had also had to retire.

To take all these troops in hand, distribute officers, and get acquainted with the units he commanded was the task suddenly thrust on General Foch.

Those who lived through these tragic hours with the chief give us a picture of him interrogating the liaison officers, who had no idea exactly where the different units really were, and punctuating his questions with "You don't know? All right, go and find out!"; reconstructing in his head the mosaic of which so many pieces were still missing, gradually seeing things taking shape, calcu-

lating his effective forces, estimating approximately his reserves of ammunition, looking for his centres of supply.

One day he was at Nancy with his beloved 20th Corps, completely absorbed in the immediate tactical problem of the Bavarian attack ; the next it was an entirely new question with a new enemy, whose strategical ideas and whose methods he had not yet been able to analyse, and with a new instrument of which he knew nothing.

He was impassioned in his search for information, and classed the information he received with that implacable method which is the strong point of that luminous brain of his.

And yet, all through these days his heart was already beginning to be torn with anguish. For a whole week he had been without news of his son, Germain Foch, in the 131st Infantry Regiment. He knew that his regiment was engaged on the Belgian frontier. He had no news either of his son-in-law,

Captain Becourt, of the 26th *Chasseurs-à-pied*, who was also fighting in the same region to the north of Briey. But this was no time for private emotions. The father gave place to the soldier. Nothing but country mattered.

THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE

Much has been written about the Battle of the Marne, and it is not our intention to give any complete survey of it here. Its general outline is, as a matter of fact, already familiar to everybody. General Joffre, having broken off the battle in Belgium and ordered a general retreat, decided on August 25th to re-establish his line farther south, and fixed on the Marne as the position. With uncompromising courage he resolved to modify the command of certain units, and in spite of all bonds of friendship he sacrificed several superior officers, who were either too old or not energetic enough, and replaced them at the head of the Armies with leaders who had proved their worth.

General Maunoury left the Lorraine front on August 27th to take command of the 6th Army, which had just been created; General Foch gave up the 20th Corps on August 28th to be placed at the head of the 9th Army, also newly created. It was these two men, newly promoted and chosen as if by divination by the Generalissimo, that were destined to ensure the decisive action of the Battle of the Marne.

On the left wing, Maunoury fought the battles of the Ourcq, and surprised von Kluck by a flank attack he had not anticipated. In the centre, Foch resisted von Hausen's formidable attack, turned the defensive into an offensive, and finally brought about that rupture in the huge German line, already sadly weakened from its right to its left, which was to decide the battle.

We are all familiar with General Joffre's famous Order of the Day, dated September 6th, 1914:

" At a time when we are engaging on a battle on which the safety of the country depends, it is essential to remind every one that this is no longer the moment to look behind. Every effort must be employed in attacking and repulsing the enemy. Any body of men who cannot advance farther must at all costs keep the ground that has been gained, and rather be killed on the spot than retire. In the present circumstances, no weakness can be tolerated."

The Allied line, from left to right, was composed of the 6th Army (Maunoury) between Paris and Meaux ; the English Army (Field-Marshal French), to the south of Coulommiers ; the 5th Army (Franchet d'Esperey), to the south of Montmirail ; the 9th Army (Foch), from Sézanne to Sommesous ; the 4th Army (de Langle de Cary), from Sommesous to the east of Vitry-le-François ; the 3rd Army (Sarrail), from Vitry-le-François to Verdun.

From Verdun to the Vosges, our right flank was guarded by the 3rd (Ruffey), 2nd (Castelnau), and 1st (Dubail) Armies, and the Alsace detachment.

The 9th Army under General Foch, which, as we have seen, occupied the centre of the line of battle during the Battle of the Marne, was on September 5th, that is on the eve of the offensive, disposed as follows :

The 42nd Division formed the left wing in touch with the 10th Corps of the neighbouring Army under General Franchet d'Esperey. They were on both sides of the road from Épernay to Sézanne, high up near Mondement, Saint-Prix, and Villeneuve-lès-Charleville. The Maroccan Division followed them in the line. Then came the 9th Corps, which occupied the region of Fère-Champenoise, with its advance guards in the direction of Morain-le-Petit and the north of the marshes of Saint-Gond. The 11th Corps barred the road from Châlons-sur-Marne to Arcis-sur-Aube in the region of Sommesous.

On the right of it, the 9th Cavalry Division, hard by the Camp de Mailly, joined the 17th Corps of General de Langle de Cary's Army. The 52nd and 60th Reserve Divisions were held in reserve to the north of the Aube.

General Foch's Army had to face a part of von Buelow's Army and a part of the Army of von Hausen.

In his Order of the evening of September 4th, prescribing a general offensive for the morning of the 9th, the Commander-in-Chief had specified the task of the 9th Army as follows :

" The 9th Army will cover the right of the 5th Army by holding the outlets south of the Saint-Gond marshes, and by taking part of their forces on to the plateau north of Sézanne."

On the morning of the 6th, General Foch had transferred his Headquarters to Pleurs. This little village of Champagne lies at the junction of the Auges

and Pleure rivers. There is a modern château at some distance from the village, and there General Foch was at an equal distance from Sézanne and Fère-Champenoise, and at a cross-roads allowing him at a moment's notice to proceed either to the right or left.

On the first day of the battle, the 9th Corps, after having established their outposts to the north of the Saint-Gond marshes, had unfortunately to withdraw them before a German attack, but were able to hold the outlets to the south as they had been instructed to do. They had the Prussian Guard in front of them.

On the evening of the 6th, Morain-le-Petit was set on fire, and the 11th Corps had to evacuate Écury-le-Repos and Normée before the 12th German Corps.

For the next day, September 7th, General Foch had instructed the 42nd Division and the Maroccan Division to regulate their offensive movement on that of the 10th Corps of the neighbouring army.

The 9th Corps were to hold their position at the southern outlet of the Saint-Gond marshes.

The 11th Corps must maintain their position in the woods they had occupied the evening before, to the south of Écury-le-Repos and Normée, on the railway from Esternay to Vitry-le-François, and try if possible to renew the offensive in the direction of Clamanges and Colligny. One of the two reserve divisions, up till now kept out of action, was to take up its position to the right of the 11th Corps to cover it and hold the outlets at Lenharrée, Vassimont and Haussimont. The 9th Cavalry Division was to ensure liaison with the neighbouring 4th Army.

On September 7th, in the morning, the 9th Army was violently attacked. The 11th Corps was caught by fire from the heavy batteries which the 12th German Corps had installed at Clamanges. The 42nd Division and the Maroccan Division were heavily assaulted at Vil-

leneuve-lès-Charleville, Soisy, Mondement, and La Forêt, but they held fast, as also did the 9th Corps.

On the 8th the general German offensive became furious. The attack on the 42nd Division and the Maroccan Division on the left wing continued as violent as it had been the whole of the day before, but in spite of that, in the evening, the 42nd Division, not content with having resisted the furious German onslaught, made a magnificent counter-attack, reoccupied Saint-Prix, and pushed the enemy back to the north of the Saint-Gond marshes. In the centre the 9th Corps never moved, but the 11th Corps had to yield ground before troops belonging to the Prussian Guard, the 12th Regular Corps, and the 12th Reserve Corps. They withdrew to the line Corroy—Gourgançon—Semoine, *i.e.* the line of the little river called the Maurienne, taking with them the reserve division on their right. This reserve division made a counter-attack on Fère-Cham-

MARSHAL FOCH AT G.H.Q.

penoise, thus enabling the 11th Corps to reoccupy the heights to the north of Euvy. But unfortunately this retirement of the 11th Corps during the day of the 8th had put General Foch's Headquarters at Pleurs too near the battle line. They had therefore to be moved to General Headquarters at Plancy, where the Staff had been stationed for the first day or two.

General Foch saw very clearly what the German plan of battle was. They had found the point of least resistance, which was the front held by the 11th Corps. It was at this point that they would most certainly continue their attack, and it was therefore the right wing of his army that he would have to support. But with what? All his units were engaged elsewhere. It was then that General Foch had a real stroke of genius. Of all the troops under his command, two had distinguished themselves by an extraordinary keenness—the 42nd Division and the Maroccan

Division. Not content with merely warding off attacks, they had given blow for blow. The 42nd Division had covered themselves with glory by pushing back the enemy to the north of the marshes of Saint-Gond ; and now a sacred fire burned within them, strengthening their moral and rendering them capable of the greatest things. It was to this division that General Foch was going to appeal. This was the division that he was going to remove from the firing line, in full battle, in spite of all the doctrines of the Staff College prohibiting such a decision. He was going to ask General Franchet d'Esperey, his neighbour of the 5th Army, to extend the front of the 10th Corps to fill the gap. This removal of the 42nd Division was a *tour de force* of unheard-of audacity. It was carried out without the enemy's knowledge.

On the morning of September 9th the whole front held by the 9th Army was violently attacked. The Maroccan Division under General Humbert fought most

heroically to maintain their position at the Château of Mondement, but they were just going to yield when the 42nd Division, now established behind them, sent them part of their artillery to give them a friendly hand. The batteries so lent rejoined the 42nd Division a little later.

In the centre and on the right wing, the 9th and the 11th Corps had to retire beneath the weight of the German attack.

The Prussian Guard, in front of Fère-Champenoise, had made a colossal effort with the aid of the German 12th Regular and 12th Reserve Corps. The French front had to withdraw. The 11th Corps was now some five miles to the south of the railway line, making a break between them and the 9th Corps now close to the northern side of the railway line to the west of Fère-Champenoise. The enemy threw himself into this gap ; he knew that he would find no one in front of him ; he knew that General Foch had no more reserves ; the battle was

won ! It was then that there appeared in the plain, about six o'clock in the evening, when the Germans had already gone into billets at Fère-Champenoise and were beginning to get intoxicated, not only morally but physically, a body of French troops, new, unrecognised, unsuspected.

It was the 42nd Division, which, in spite of its fatigues of the preceding days, had circled round behind the whole front and was once more advancing to battle. This unexpected apparition completely upset the German command. Here were French shells falling on the flank of his columns, which had been advancing so enthusiastically and so confidently. Was it a whole army of reinforcements ? The Germans retired, completely disconcerted. The 42nd Division had decided the day.

I can still hear General Foch giving us an account of this whole September 9th affair, several months later. He had put matches on the table—red matches that

I have kept as a souvenir—and he was arranging all the army corps again in front of us. The 42nd Division, which was only allowed half a match, was performing its evolutions again under his hand while he talked.

The 12th German Corps match had just turned right about face.

"They went off like that," he said, "when they saw the 42nd Division getting ready for battle! Then we did let them have it hot! It was all that we could do" (and the General let go the half-match of the 42nd Division and made a gesture forwards, towards the middle of the table). "It might succeed; it might fail. It succeeded. The men were at the end of their tether, but they went forward all the same."

We could not help thinking while we listened to him of his well-known eulogy of the French soldier: Activity, intelligence, dash, responsiveness, devotion to duty, patriotic fervour—"native qualities which endow every member of the Higher

Command, leaders of lesser rank, commanders of regiments, battalions, companies, and even the private soldiers themselves, with treasures of initiative, valour, and spontaneity."

The chief knew that he could demand of these men to reach the utter limits of human resistance, as they did in the first fighting in the Ardennes and Lorraine, when they were "raving" with fatigue.

Our thoughts turned, too, to his famous aphorism: "A gained battle is a battle in which one will not confess oneself beaten."

The story goes—and it is probably true, for it is quite like him—that on the afternoon of the 9th, when the withdrawal of the 9th Corps and the retreat of the 11th Corps had just been reported to him, he telegraphed more or less in these words to General Headquarters: "My centre yielding, my right retreating, excellent situation, I am attacking."

It was then that he thought of the

42nd Division. He had a presentiment that this flank attack would completely rout the enemy. Therein lies the genius of the great tactician.

On the 10th, at five o'clock in the morning, when the order was given for a general attack, the battle was already won. At nine o'clock the 42nd Division entered Fère-Champenoise, and that same evening General Foch established his Headquarters there. They had to clear the place. Officers of the Prussian Guard, still drunk, were lying about the floor in the midst of bottles of champagne. They had celebrated victory rather too soon.

After the Battle of the Marne, the whole Franco-British line moved northwards and pressed the Germans back to the Aisne.

For some weeks General Foch had his Headquarters at Châlons-sur-Marne, which he had passed through less than a month before in search of an army.

GENERAL FOCH TAKES COMMAND OF THE NORTHERN ARMY GROUP

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL FOCH TAKES COMMAND OF THE NORTHERN ARMY GROUP

After the Battle of the Marne, General Foch's Army, which, as we have seen, formed the centre of the French line, between the Armies of General Langle de Cary and General d'Esperey, remained in that position before the Aisne. This Champagne line was gradually being strengthened, and was to remain so. The French Higher Command, with that same quickness of judgment which enabled them to prepare a stand on the Marne while the French troops were still engaged in Belgium, soon guessed what the German plan would be. Blocked in Lorraine, held and pushed back in Champagne, the enemy, faithful to his doctrines, would no doubt attempt an

offensive on the other wing. He would try to capture Amiens. As early as September 11th, General Joffre ordered General Maunoury, whose Army formed the extreme left wing of the French forces, to station his troops on the right bank of the Oise. On September 15th he reinforced Maunoury's Army by another army corps. On September 20th he entrusted General de Castelnau, who by his victory at the Grand-Couronné had definitely closed the road to Nancy against the Germans, with a new army to the left and north of General Maunoury's. This army was composed of the 28th Division, the 17th Division, and one of the divisions of the 20th Corps.

In more technical accounts, it will be possible to describe more minutely this wonderful feat, which consisted in transporting from the battle front in Lorraine, Argonne, and Alsace, division after division, without leaving any gaps in the line. Railways, motor lorries, every kind

of vehicle was laid under contribution. The whole French army succeeded in slipping northwards while fighting still went on on the stationary fronts. Germany, in spite of the vastness of her fighting forces, was obliged to do the same in order to support her attempt to overwhelm the French left wing. She also had to remove divisions from her front line. Although she had the advantage in lines of communication, she was less quick than the French. When the 6th German Army, transferred from Lorraine, was ready to push towards Roye and Montdidier, Castelnau's Army was already there to block the way; when von Marwitz's cavalry corps tried to get through between Arras and Bapaume, the French cavalry was there already. In this Race for the Sea, the French were always able to get in front, and they were far and away first at Nieuport. The roads *nach Paris, nach Amiens, nach Calais,* were closed one after the other.

The front was now of an absolutely inconceivable length: from Pas-de-Calais to Belfort. The Commander-in-Chief realised that to superintend such a line single-handed from General Headquarters would be risking the delay of necessary orders.

On October 4th, late in the afternoon, he telegraphed to General Foch at Châlons that he was investing him with the functions of Assistant to the General Commanding-in-Chief, and asking him to start immediately for the north, in order to co-ordinate the action of Castelnau's Army, Maud'huy's Army, which had just been formed to the north of Castelnau's Army, the group of territorial divisions under General Brugère, and the cavalry corps under General de Mitry and General Conneau. There is something very typical about the way General Foch was thus chosen point-blank to settle these formidable strategic and tactical problems on the spot. When he had arrived at Châlons, on August 29th,

he had had no idea where his army was ; when he left, on October 4th, at ten o'clock at night, he knew nothing of the task that had been thrust upon him.

The order that had been sent him had been so quickly transmitted and so quickly executed that when General Foch arrived at four in the morning, at Breteuil, General de Castelnau's Headquarters, that officer was sound asleep and knew nothing at all about the new order. They got black coffee heated, and for two hours these two generals, one of whom had but yesterday been subordinate to the other, a fact which they had both forgotten, discussed the exact situation on the front with that marvellous clear-headedness that characterised them both. At six o'clock their cars were set a-going, and off they went towards Amiens, on to the roads round Doullens, and through Saint-Pol to Aubigny, where General de Maud'huy had his Headquarters. By that time it was about nine in the morning. They immediately began to discuss the

situation, and the final result was, as usual, that General Foch had gained a clear idea of the means now at his disposal, and of the enemy's resources so far as they were then known. Everything was separated out and classed in his brain. He now had all the data of the problem.

Its complexity was extreme, for at the end of September Field-Marshal French had expressed a desire for the British army to take up its place again on the left of the French army, so as to be nearer its base. General Joffre had acceded to this request, and on October 1st began the removal of the British troops from the Aisne front. The 6th (Maunoury) and 5th (Franchet d'Esperey) French Armies filled the gap by extending their front lines.

General Foch, then, had to reckon with the new element of a British army, which during this whole month of October was going to concentrate in the Hazebrouck-Saint-Omer zone and form an extension of his own line.

The obstruction of the railways by this transference of the British army was also a factor not to be scorned in making calculations about supplies and the movement of French troops.

If we remember, too, that on October 9th the Belgian army evacuated Antwerp when they were on the point of capitulating, and were attempting to reach the line of the Yser by Eccloo and the coast under cover of an infantry division, a British cavalry division that had landed at Ostend, and a brigade of French marine gunners sent from Dunkirk to Ghent, one will have some slight idea of how widely scattered were the pawns, and how vast the chess-board over which General Foch suddenly had to pore.

For a short time he had a vision of a possible offensive against the attacking German wing. His idea was that while the Armies of Castelnau and Maud'huy formed an insurmountable barrier, the British army should proceed to Armen-

tières, Lille, and Tournai. For that there would have had to have been a speeding-up of the British landing forces, a quickness of movement essentially French. The valiant little British expeditionary force was not trained to these methods. They trailed an infinity of baggage after them ; they were tired and slow. The idea of a complete overthrow of the German forces had to be abandoned. Only one plan of action remained possible —definitely to bar the road against the invader.

THE BATTLE OF THE YSER

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF THE YSER

General Foch remained at Doullens till October 24th. He was superintending the construction of that wall of defence of which the Armies of Castelnau and Maud'huy, stretching from Soissons to the north of Arras, formed the foundation. The British army had taken up its position in front of Hazebrouck. The arrival of the Belgian army from Antwerp was expected, and they were to stop and station themselves on the Yser. Between Dixmude and Armentières there remained one open door. It was finally closed on October 20th by the French Higher Command creating a detachment of the Belgian army under the command of General d'Urbal.

There could no longer be any question of the German army's turning the French left wing. To pierce the French line was now their only hope, and they very soon made desperate attempts to do so.

On October 24th, General Foch arrived at Cassel. This dominating position in the middle of the flat plains of Flanders was admirably suited for a command post. Good roads took one in a few hours to the different points on the front.

We have no intention at all of giving an account of the Battle of Flanders, with all its numerous ups and downs, or describing how fresh German divisions were hurled against Ypres and Dixmude.[1] What we are after is the thought and the plans of the chief.

In his line of battle he had two new elements of whose exact fighting value he was completely ignorant : the Belgian element and the English element. The

[1] V. R. Puaux : *La Course à la Mer* (" The Race for the Sea "), pub. Berger-Levrault, Paris.

former, in the short campaign in Belgium, had given proof of a sublime heroism. But possibly the moral shock of seeing their whole country overrun and plundered, their homes invaded or burnt, would be enough to break their energies and render problematical an absolutely efficient resistance to the German onslaught.

The German command would no doubt have made a similar calculation, so General Foch sent the 42nd Division, that had done so splendidly in the Marne operations, to support the Belgians, behind Nieuport. The brigade of marine gunners under Admiral Ronar'ch, that had covered the retreat of the Belgian army, guarded the way to Dunkirk with reserves composed of the French territorial regiments from the Dunkirk garrison. A little "French cement," as General Foch called it, was within reach to block up possible holes.

The British, as we have said, were the other unknown quantity. Brilliant

soldiers as they were, of proven courage and magnificent physical resistance, the unprecedented brutality of the present war had surprised and disconcerted them.

General Foch knew the English. He had been at the head of the French military mission sent to the Cambridge manœuvres in 1912, and he had made close friends with the English Staff officers there. He had also taken advantage of this expedition to make a minute study of the abilities and capacity of his Allies. The first arm, the infantry, seemed to him excellent, but the command lacked experience. According to his own saying, "Victory will not be content with eleventh-hour virtues." We must do this justice to the British Staff that, in spite of their pride, General Foch's advice was always listened to and followed. We can give no better example than the famous interview on the night of October 30th between General Foch and Field-Marshal Sir John French. We quote from the account given by Captain

Meunier-Surcouf, one of the General's A.D.C.'s.

"On October 30th, 1914, the General heard that the British cavalry had been violently attacked by superior forces and had had to yield considerable ground to the south of Ypres. The two strong points had been lost; the line had been pierced, and the flank under General Dubois was menaced. General Foch left Cassel and motored as quickly as he could to Saint-Omer, where he arrived at one o'clock in the morning. When Field-Marshal Sir John French had been fetched, he said, 'Is it true that your line has been broken?'

"'Yes,' replied the Field-Marshal.

"'Have you any reserves?'

"'None.'

"'Well, you can have mine. We must fill the gap at once; if the Germans get through at a single point we are lost, because of the enemy's huge attacking forces. I have eight battalions of the

32nd Division that General Joffre is sending me. Take them, and on you go!'

"Sir John French was deeply moved. He rose and clasped both General Foch's hands firmly. 'Thank you,' he said; 'that is splendid help you have brought me.'

"By two o'clock the orders were given and the gap filled."

We must add to Captain Meunier-Surcouf's account that during the day of the 30th, when the Germans had compelled the 7th British Division and the right of the 1st British Corps to retire and had captured Zandvoorde and Hollebeke, General Dubois, commanding the 9th French Corps, had already put five battalions and a group of artillery at the disposal of the 1st British Corps. Later on, too, he had sent them three fresh battalions to try and stem the offensive expected on the next day.

The eight battalions of the 32nd Divi-

sion that General Foch was promising were those that were just beginning to detrain at Elverdinghe.

We think we may mention that Monsieur André Tardieu, High-Commissioner of France to the United States, then lieutenant on General Foch's Staff, was present as interpreter at this interview between Foch and French.

On the very day after this interview the chiefs were to meet again under circumstances that have been described by Monsieur Charles Le Goffic.

"After having captured Gheluvelt from the British, on the morning of October 31st, the enemy advanced towards Hooge and Veldhoek. There were no front-line troops left except the 2nd Division, and they yielded about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"Field-Marshal French had now no further reserves, and, as there was nothing else to be done, decided to retire. Major Jamet, the liaison officer, came to communicate this decision to General

Dubois, who was commanding the 9th Corps, on the immediate left of the British Army. He then rushed off to Vlamertinghe to notify General d'Urbal, commanding the Belgian army. By a happy chance General Foch happened to be there, and the same moment Major Jamet saw Field-Marshal French's motor passing on his way back to G.H.Q.

"With praiseworthy initiative, Major Jamet stopped the car and told the Field-Marshal that General Foch was with General d'Urbal, and suggested that in view of the gravity of the situation an immediate interview between the two chiefs might perhaps be desirable, and that this was an opportunity not to be missed, seeing their Headquarters were 25 miles distant. The Field-Marshal very willingly fell in with the suggestion, got out of his car and made his way into General d'Urbal's Headquarters, where the least surprised to see him walking in there was certainly not General Foch. As a matter of fact, if some kindly provi-

dence had been arranging matters, the whole train of circumstances could not have turned out better."

This conference meant the saving of Ypres and the re-establishment of the Allied line. Neither French nor Foch, says M. Le Goffic, have ever told any one what passed between them.

"All we know is that the Field-Marshal said to Foch, with his slight English accent and his British habit of pronouncing the French 'u' like 'ou,' 'Alors il ne reste qu'à nous faire *touer*?' ('Well there's nothing to be done, but get killed?'), and that Foch's reply was, 'We must stand firm first. We can die afterwards.'

"And so it was that on that same evening of the 31st October, Morel's Brigade was moved rapidly to Hooge with Galard's infantry squadron to support the 7th Brigade of British cavalry, and the retirement was immediately stopped.

The 1st British Corps, on the line Bois-du-Polygone—Voelhoek—Herenthage, renewed the offensive with a magnificent counter-attack. In a few hours the situation was saved, our line re-established, Ypres saved."

Captain Meunier-Surcouf has given the following account of the same interview.

"General Foch begged Sir John French to prevent any retreat. He refused: he could do no more, his troops were at the end of their tether. But General Foch was determined. He pointed out the danger, the incalculable consequences of a lost battle: 'We must stick to it all the same,' he said; 'we must stick to it till we die; one must never yield or retreat in the middle of a battle, the pursuit is so formidable. At this stage it would be a catastrophe. Stay where you are, I'll come and help you. While he spoke he was writing all his ideas on an odd scrap of paper

taken from the table, which he now handed over to Field-Marshal French.

"And he, understanding, and remembering too the generous offer of the day before, turned it over and wrote simply: 'Carry out General Foch's orders,' signed it, and handed the paper to one of his officers."

From a purely historical point of view there are certain contradictions between these two accounts: not as to what really happened, but as to how. M. Le Goffic believes that the two army chiefs were alone, and Captain Meunier-Surcouf shows us Field-Marshal French handing the sheet of paper to one of his officers, who must then have been with him. As far as we remember, Field-Marshal French understands French only approximately, and General Foch does not speak English. There was always some Staff officer present at their interviews, speaking the two languages and ready to help. The conference at Vlamertinghe more than

probably had witnesses both on the English and the French side.

And after all that is a mere detail. The important thing to notice is the indomitable energy with which General Foch, responsible as he was for the whole northern French front, gets his ideas carried out, imparts his own confidence to others in the hour of tragedy, and remains true to that essentially French ideal : Never despair.

In view of this magnificent example of his power, it would be well to recall the chapter he has devoted to Gravelotte in his book, *La Manœuvre pour la Bataille.* The whole spirit of his appeal at Vlamertinghe is there.

" Their physical strength was at an end, but a final attack carried out even by weak troops might in such circumstances produce a very considerable result."

So, it was essential that the commander-

in-chief should not let his will be dominated by the state of exhaustion of his troops.

"His will, on the contrary, should be able to sway men and horses to the very last breath of their bodies, and should be able to demand from them a last and supreme effort to march against the enemy."

"The artillery received orders to advance, not to produce any material result —they were lacking in everything by which they could aspire to that—but *to gain a purely moral effect, to confirm their will to win, their power to advance,* and thus to ensure a victory which still hung in the balance."

"As one may well imagine, repeated attacks failed to break through the enemy's line, but up to the very last moment they showed *their will and their power to attack.*"

"There lies the magnificent lesson, the paraphrase of the well-known principle, 'The best way to defend is to attack,' which has now been turned into: 'The weaker one is, the more one attacks.'"

"In this constant fight for the moral ascendant, without hope of decisive success, they had to go on for a whole day performing the necessary acts of aggression without any strong reserves. This was accomplished by isolated actions instead of combined attacks. Continuous wastage, which is always an evil, was here a necessary evil. It had to be borne, but was mitigated as far as possible. First one lot of troops, then another, had to be sacrificed. They were sacrificed, but at the same time the commander-in-chief made sure that in each effort the troops should be powerful enough to give some hope of a favourable result. A brigade was not thrown into the fight squadron by squadron, or battalion by

battalion, but whole. In default of the one great ensemble effort which had had to be given up, several 'partial ensembles' were carried through successfully."

"Such were the requisite sacrifices, at the expense of which the authorities, now animated by the sentiment of war and enlightened by the sight of the battlefield, repaired their mistakes and their strategical blindness in cabinet. Once again tactics avenged the disasters of strategy. The soldier saved the higher command."

We must render real homage to Field-Marshal Sir John French for having, in such an hour, known how to sink his own pride as commander-in-chief of an autonomous army and place unlimited confidence in General Foch. If now we have been able to realise unity of command, it is to this collaboration of Foch and French in the Battle of Flanders that

we must go back for the first sign and the first experiment of it. On October 31st, 1914, the British Staff realised all that was represented by General Foch's personality. They were drawn irresistibly to him. They had faith.

The magnetism of his personality had produced an exactly similar effect on the command of the brave little Belgian army. After their retreat from Antwerp, the Belgians, too, were exhausted, lacked ammunition, were discouraged. On their arrival at the Yser, where they hoped to be able to rest a little, they were immediately engaged by the enemy. On October 16th the German bombardment with 5·9's began. The next day the French artillery turned up to give their Belgian comrades a hand. On the morning of the 19th the Germans launched their attack and captured Keyem and Beerst. The French marine gunners succeeded in recapturing the latter village, but the Belgian Staff gave orders to retire to the left bank of the Yser. On the

20th, columns of German troops in massed formation hurled themselves on Dixmude. The attack continued throughout the night and during the whole day of the 21st. The Belgian army was compelled to make use of its last reserves. It was at the end of its strength. It thought it could hold out no longer and would be compelled to retire behind Dunkirk. It had already retired to the line of the Beverdijk. General Foch sent the 42nd Division to strengthen the wall of defence, and then he came himself to comfort and encourage their valiant leaders : " You must stand fast whatever the cost," he said. " Look here, there's sure to be a line you can hold," and he turned to a map, one of those admirable Belgian Staff maps, that was lying on the table. " Look, here is the very thing : the railway line from Nieuport to Dixmude ! And there's an embankment ! It's a line. I don't know what it's worth, but it's a line anyhow. If there were only a little water in fro

of it, you'd be masters of the situation." His mind was working as he spoke. He had just mentioned water. Was there no means of flooding the ground? It was a project that had been carefully studied in planning the defences of Dunkirk.

The idea gained substance. It must be carried out. The Belgian officers round the General forgot their cares, and were fired by contact with the great warrior. They, too, began to remember now that the problem of flooding the land had been discussed in connection with the defence of Flanders. Documents about it must exist. The water engineers must certainly have the data. Captain Nuyteer took the matter in hand. He went to Furnes and routed out Kogge the *garde-wateringe*, who had the plan of the Nieuport locks. In three days the Belgian sappers had finished walling up the railway bridges. On the 28th the lock-gates were opened, and the water welled out over the low-lying

plain. The German artillery sank in the slime, and the German infantry floundered about till they had finally to abandon the place. The Belgian army was saved, and the last remnant of Belgian territory was saved—a fact of very great political importance.

All this was brought about by the magnetic influence of one man, who has knowledge, strength of will, faith, and who gains inspiration from the battlefield.

Up till November 15th, it was the same story everywhere. For each German offensive—and they became more formidable and more desperate every day, —General Foch retaliated by a French offensive. He gave the enemy the impression of a numerical strength that did not exist; he moved units from one end of the line to the other, and made these "partial ensembles" which, as we have seen, Alvensleben had proved so successful at Gravelotte. One day he would have only one reserve regiment. Another day he would have to take two battalions

of *Zouaves* or *Chasseurs*, and transport them in motor lorries to save the situation at some point or other. If this reinforcement, the only one he had at his disposal, was not sufficient, what would happen? In his little office at the Cassel Town Hall, he would sit at night with his elbows on a map and the telephone at hand, chewing at a cigar, and looking from the map to the clock, an old Louis XVI clock, and back again—waiting. Everything is quiet. The little Flanders town has gone early to bed. In the deserted square, with its irregular cobbles, steps echo, from time to time. Some Staff officer going home to bed. Then the sentry moves about to try and get a little warmer. Silence again. The minute hand of the clock creeps noiselessly round. How slowly it moves, and how terribly long the news is in arriving! There is a knock at the door, and Colonel Weygand, Chief of Staff, comes in. He has a paper in his hand. "There is a telephone message

KING GEORGE CONVERSING WITH MARSHAL FOCH.

from the 9th Army to say that . . ." The General looks up. "All right, all right." His plan has succeeded; the reinforcements have arrived in time. Now he must go to bed. A last look at the map, and then the eyeglasses at the end of their cord disappear into the breast pocket of his dolman. The General puts on his little black coat and rams his *képi*, with its gold oak leaves, on to the back of his head. In the hall the gendarme on duty gets up hastily off the chair he had been snoozing on. The General gives a quick salute, as much as to say, "Go on sleeping, my good fellow," and goes on down the steep staircase. The sentry presents arms under the tricolour colours, with their red and white bow. The colonel or one of the officers working in the office goes with the General to the lawyer's house where he is billeted, and the next day at an early hour the General is once more at his office.

In spite of the immensity of the drama

that was being acted in these days, a great, almost a religious, serenity filled his spirit and enlightened it. He had devoted himself entirely to what his country demanded of him. He could do no more. On September 9th, after having given the order for the movement of the 42nd Division, he went out for a walk with his A.D.C., Lieutenant Ferasson of the Artillery, and they talked about economics and metallurgy as they walked along the roads round Plancy. Destiny was running its course. This manœuvre was his supreme hope, but there could be no report as to the result for several hours, and what was the good of getting nervous by sitting waiting?

The complete hold-up of the Germans on the Yser and in front of Ypres on November 15th, 1914, had consequences at least as important as the victory on the Marne. It spelt ruin to all the strategical ideas of the German Staff. All action on the wings was now impossible. Military history was entering on

a new era, for no one had ever foreseen a battle front hundreds of miles in length, bounded at one end by the sea and at the other by a neutral frontier.

From the point of view of France and England, the Battle of Flanders left the way open to and from the Channel ports, and Great Britain could thus maintain direct and rapid contact with her expeditionary force, which, from being a "despicable little army," as the Kaiser had dared to call it, was to become one of the greatest fighting forces of the world.

One trembles to think what would have happened if we had lost Calais and Dunkirk, and if Germany had been able to establish submarine bases there.

THE FIGHTING IN ARTOIS

CHAPTER XI

THE FIGHTING IN ARTOIS

After the check on the Yser a sort of calm settled over the whole front. The German Higher Command had got rather out of their bearings, and did not quite know what to do next. The French Higher Command were letting their troops rest after their three months' glorious resistance of the most formidable onslaught history has ever recorded.

Trench warfare necessitated a new kind of tactics, made up of surprises and destructive bombardment by artillery. The first conclusive experiment in this direction was carried through by General Foch on May 9th, 1915, when Carency, the spur of the Moulin-Topard, and Wood 125 were taken from the enemy, thus permitting the gallant African troops to

pass through Souchez and capture Vimy Ridge. On September 25th, when the great Champagne offensive was just being launched, the French made a new advance to the foot of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

General Foch had left his Headquarters at Cassel in the spring to move to Frevent, on the road from Amiens to Doullens.

In the autumn he came to Dury, in the immediate vicinity of Amiens.

The centre of operations was changed. The future operations on the Somme were in the air.

THE 1916 OPERATIONS

Here we are entering upon history rather too recent for it to be easy to write about with any precision. 1916 was Verdun, and the Somme offensive which compelled the Germans to withdraw their lines. General Foch supervised the latter operations with extraordinary skill.

THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIFIED FRONT

CHAPTER XII

THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIFIED FRONT

On September 30th, 1916, General Foch was granted the honour of retaining his rank without age limit, an honour only paid to the most eminent chiefs.

The prolongation of the war had raised problems not only of tactics but of strategy and politics combined. The Armies of the Allies formed one continuous front, but the weakness of the Entente lay in their lack of co-ordination, as opposed to the enemy, who were under the unique and autocratic direction of the Berlin Staff.

What was wanted was a powerful military brain to concentrate all these

questions and to classify and think out all these problems. For the moment, at any rate, G.H.Q. relieved General Foch of the terrible worry of commanding a group of Armies which were going to bury themselves in the trenches through the autumn and winter, and take part in no important operation.

With his immediate colleagues he organised, first at Senlis and then in the east, a sort of committee for the discussion of great inter-allied military questions. This was how, in secret and in silence, an army was got ready on the west of the Jura, to stop a German invasion by Switzerland, if Germany should have recourse to that supreme crime, or to go to the help of Italy in case of need.

With the greatest discretion, either General Foch or Colonel Weygand would proceed to Italy to study the material conditions attending the proposed landing of French troops on Italian soil, and to arrange everything most minutely in

view of a probable Austro-German attack. When, later on, the help of French troops was demanded, everything was prepared, even to the hour the trains were to start.

On May 15th, 1917, General Foch was appointed Chief of the General Staff. He took up his quarters at the Invalides, and there pursued his double task of studying all the Allied fronts, not forgetting the Americans, and of forming the liaison between the Commander-in-Chief and the Government.

We know how, later on, he went himself to direct operations on the Italian front. When the day comes that we have a full account of the part he played in that campaign, with his extraordinary insight into conditions and possibilities, we shall no doubt be able to accord him a meed of praise quite equal to what he gained on the Marne and the Yser.

The necessity for an Allied War Council was at last made plain, and General Foch was eminently suited to represent France on it. His moral ascendant, his remark-

able general culture, and his extensive knowledge of all the problems of war, marked him out at once as its chief.

Lucien Jonas, the painter, who was authorised to take sketches through a glass door of one of the sittings of the Council at Versailles, says: "I could not hear; and besides, I should have taken good care not to hear; but I saw. General Foch held his listeners under a sort of fascination. One felt that in his statement there was not a break, not a hesitation. Everything seemed to be clear, exact, irresistible."

THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE

CHAPTER XIII

THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE

We are all acquainted with the events of the present year. In March 1918, Ludendorff launched his great offensive against the British. They had to retire. A gap was opened in their line. The peril was great.

On March 26th, at Doullens, at a conference between M. Clemenceau and Lord Milner, the representatives of the Allied Governments, General Foch was chosen to co-ordinate operations, and chiefly to prevent a break between the British and French armies.

The task was an arduous and a formidable one, but it was a task eminently suited to that keen brain, which delights in difficulties so that it may have the pleasure of overcoming them.

Was it not General Foch who said one day to an officer who was arguing that " the problem was difficult " :

" Don't tell me the problem is difficult. If it weren't difficult, it wouldn't be a problem. If we are given brains, we're given them to use. Otherwise, what's the good of us ? "

An examination of the situation led him to immediate decisions.

The order was given for the 1st French Army to take up their position, as and when they were detrained, between the French 3rd Army and the British. One after another, the 70th, the 133rd, the 12th, the 3rd, and the 5th Divisions took up their station at the appointed place. On March 27th, in the evening, the Germans entered Montdidier, but the next day a British counter-attack in the region of the canal drove the enemy back to Rosières-en-Santerre. To the south of the pocket, the French recaptured Assainvillers, Boulogne-la-Grasse, and Conchy-les-Pots. These villages were

lost again later on, but the enemy had been taught his lesson ; he knew that the Allies could resist him, and so he went no farther in that direction. He then turned his attention to the north. By this time, however, the French divisions had all arrived. Little by little the Allied line was growing. Very thin at first, it was gaining depth from hour to hour. And, to help matters on, the 75's, the 105's, and the 155's began to thunder.

By the evening of the 28th, General Foch was so far master of the situation that he was able to place in reserve, and not immediately in the front line, the last units brought up.

On March 30th, a communiqué announced the great honour conferred on General Foch, and the same day we had the news that General Pershing had sought out General Foch, and in presence of General Pétain, M. Clemenceau, and M. Loucheur, had made the following superb offer :

"I have come to tell you that America would feel itself greatly honoured if its troops were engaged in the present battle. I ask that it should be so, in its behalf as well as on my own.

"There can be no other question than that of fighting.

"Infantry, artillery, air service—everything we have is yours. Dispose of us as you wish. Further men will come, as many as may be necessary.

"I have come on purpose to tell you that the American people will be proud to take part in the greatest and finest battle in history."

From Italy there arrived, shortly afterwards, a similar assurance of complete allegiance.

The armies of the Entente had at last a single head, universally admired and respected.

MARSHAL OF FRANCE

CHAPTER XIV

MARSHAL OF FRANCE

THE German Staff knew that the game was lost if they had not obtained the final decision before the autumn of 1918. On May 27th they made a colossal effort, and launched the offensive on the Aisne. They pushed our troops back to the Marne, captured Soissons, entered Château-Thierry, and seemed to be directly menacing Paris. As a German soldier, whose letter I have had in my hands, wrote: "Our quartermaster-sergeants are going to find billets for us in Paris." But the admirable tenacity of General Gouraud's Army succeeded in blocking the German left wing, which was to capture Reims and advance on Châlons, and, on July 18th, by an extraordinarily

opportune manœuvre, General Foch threw Mangin's Army, which was massed in the forest of Villers-Cotterets, against the enemy's flank, from Soissons to Château-Thierry. Ludendorff, with his usual scorn, under-estimated the capacities of his adversary. This cost him the retreat to the Marne, a defeat Germany will never get the better of.

Reverse succeeded reverse, and the Franco-British push to the east of Amiens, closely following on General Mangin's attack, brought the number of prisoners up to 70,000, and completely disorganised the offensive Prince Rupprecht was preparing to the north of Arras as a last attempt to retain the offensive.

The second victory of the Marne, won by General Foch, made an enormous stir throughout the whole world.

On August 6th, M. Clemenceau proposed to the Ministerial Council to elevate General Foch to the dignity of Marshal of France and confer the *Médaille Militaire* on General Pétain. A few days later

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig also received the *Médaille Militaire.*

On August 6th, the President of the Republic signed the decree conferring the Marshalate on General Foch. The decree was preceded by the following report by M. Georges Clemenceau, which perfectly expresses, the feelings of all.

Paris, August 6th, 1918.

" MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,

" The decree of December 24th, 1916, revived for the first time the rank of Marshal of France.

" I have the honour to submit for your signature, in the name of the Government, and, I may add, in the name of the whole of France, a decree conferring on General Foch this high national reward.

" At the moment when the enemy had launched a formidable offensive on a front of over sixty miles, and was counting on snatching victory from us and imposing that German peace which would

mean the enslavement of the world, General Foch and his splendid soldiers completely defeated him.

"Paris saved, Soissons and Château-Thierry re-captured after a great struggle, more than 200 villages retaken, 35,000 prisoners and 700 guns captured, the hopes so loudly proclaimed by the enemy before his attack completely shattered, the glorious armies of the Allies flung forward in one single victorious push from the borders of the Marne to the banks of the Aisne—these are some of the results of a manœuvre as admirably conceived by the Higher Command as it was superbly executed by our incomparable commanders.

"The confidence placed by the Republic and by all her Allies in the victor of the Saint-Gond marshes, in the illustrious leader of the Yser and the Somme, has been fully justified.

"In addition, the dignity of Marshal of France, conferred on General Foch, will be not only a reward for past services;

it will hallow still more, in the future, the authority of the great warrior who has been called to lead the Armies of the Entente to final victory.

"I beg you to accept, Monsieur le Président, the homage of my deep respect.

"CLEMENCEAU."

On August 23rd, a glorious summer day, M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau, accompanied by several generals, motored out from Paris to G.H.Q. to present Marshal Foch with the insignia of his honour. They were received by M. Georges Leygues, Naval Minister, M. Loucheur, Armaments Minister, Marshal Foch, General Pétain, and representatives of the Allies.

No time was lost ; the little ceremony began immediately. Troops were drawn up in line, and Marshal Foch and his Staff stood in front of them. The baton was taken from its case, and M. Poincaré stepped forward and presented it to Marshal Foch in the follo ing words ;

" Monsieur le Maréchal,

" I have the pleasure of presenting you to-day, in presence of the President of the Council, the Naval Minister, the Armaments Minister, the Commander-in-Chief of the French armies, and your worthy colleagues, with the traditional insignia of the high honour the Government of the Republic has conferred upon you with the acclamation of France and the Allied countries.

" Since the beginning of the war, in the various posts you have occupied, you have justified with increasing brilliance all the hopes the army had placed in you in times of peace. The sturdy doctrine you used to set forth to your pupils has germinated in contact with facts, and has already brought forth a whole series of victories. While knowing how to mould the ideas you had professed to the new necessities of battle, you have remained true to what was the heart and soul of your teaching.

" In the month of September last, at

the Château of Mondemont, when you were giving us a masterly exposition of the phases of the battle fought in 1914 on the marshes of Saint-Gond, I could see your familiar principles taking form and life before me, and I recalled your favourite definitions : ' War, the department of moral force ; battle, the struggle between two wills ; victory, the moral superiority of the conqueror, the moral depression of the conquered.'

" This moral superiority you have tended like a sacred flame. How often in critical hours on the Yser and on the Somme have I not been a witness of your energy and your tenacity !

" Again you gave proof of the same military virtues when you became Chief of the General Staff and so technical adviser to the Government, and later when you went to Italy to take counsel with the Allied command for the defence of the Piave, the Marne of Italy.

" But it was above all, in the tragic days of March 24th, 25th and 26th last,

that you gave the measure of your character. Then your freedom of thought, your clear-sightedness, your calmness, gained the mastery over peril. The President of the Council and I know a little garden path at Doullens where it was easy enough to foresee your Marshal's baton.

" When, thanks to the generous adherence of the British and American Government, you found yourself invested with the supreme command of the Allied armies, you set yourself to realise the strategical unity of action so necessary in face of the powerful organisation of German discipline. Hardly had the first waves of the formidable American flood broken on the front, than you had, by a series of cleverly combined operations, surprised and beaten the enemy, first on the Marne and the Aisne, then on the Avre, on the Somme, on the Oise.

" You have broken his offensive, frustrated his plans, used up his best reserves, captured masses of his men, guns, ma-

chine-guns, and ammunition. All honour to you, Marshal Foch, and to all the armies you command!

"Truly, if you are not of those who let themselves be downcast by danger, neither are you of those whom victory dazzles. You do not believe that we are from now onwards at the end of our efforts and our sacrifices. You guard against optimism as much as against depression; your reasoned confidence appeals to us to continue to arm our patience and strain our will so that we may act without weariness and weary the action of the enemy. Be assured that your appeal will be listened to by the Government of the Republic and by all the Allied Governments. Your magnificent armies are worthy of their Chief. France and the Allied countries will rest worthy of their armies. We have the will to win. We shall win."

The struggle is proceeding under circumstances fatal to Germany. The Amer-

ican army has surpassed all forecasts both as to number and fighting capacity. By the beginning of July there were more than a million American soldiers in France, and the participation in battle of General Pershing's troops has been a revelation. Even by a hasty and premature calling-up of their last class of young fighting men, the German Staff is suffering from an irremediable lack of effectives. It being no longer possible to carry-on by the crushing effect of massed formations, Ludendorff has now no other resource than tactical intelligence. But German mental processes do not lend themselves easily to improvised variations. The lack of quickness and clearness is felt as soon as the mechanism is faulty.

When the Allies were in a state of numerical inferiority, General Foch, with prudence and patience, knew how to ward off the terrible danger of a desperate German offensive. To-day he holds all the cards in his hand, and we have seen how well he knows how to play them.

THE SUPREME HEAD

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPREME HEAD

NEVER has a man in the whole history of the world commanded such immense armies as General Foch now does. Never has a soldier had a more successful career. Before the war, in every grade of his life as an officer, he had given proof of his talent. The war provided the opportunity for him to develop and expand his undoubted mastery of his craft. He has been raised to supreme power, not by any stroke of fortune or some unexpected brilliant success, but by the steady and increasing manifestation of his military genius. He made his mark, simply, without intrigue and without advertisement, because he had proved himself the best man and the

most deserving. He has won nearly every honour possible.

After the Battle of the Marne he was made Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, with this splendid note attached to his name :

" Withheld for several days violent attacks directed against our centre ; finally pushed the enemy northwards by a vigorous offensive, thus exhibiting a remarkable coolness and skill in manœuvre, combined with undaunted energy and tenacity."

In 1915 he was made Grand Cross, with the following note :

" Has exhibited on all occasions, since the beginning of the campaign, both in the defensive and in the offensive, unexampled tactical skill.

" Has contributed largely, thanks to the undisputed authority and the perfect soundness of his opinions, to the perfect

co-ordination of the efforts of the Allied armies, and has thus rendered most eminent service to his country."

In 1916 he received the *Médaille Militaire*, the highest distinction given to generals. He wears the *Croix de Guerre* with palm leaves, and several foreign orders of the highest distinction.

Yet no man could be more modest or more simple. Every one who has had the honour of his acquaintance has been struck by his somewhat abrupt cordiality, which is rather frightening at first, but soon becomes so attractive.

The following account of a visit paid to General Foch on April 5th, 1918—that is, in the very middle of the great push—is of interest.

M. Paul Ginisty writes :

" We waited only a few minutes before being sent in to the General. In the building where he has his Headquarters, he occupies a room with rather fine wood

panelling and dark red hangings. It was almost empty. The General was seated before an old table with a green cloth cover. There was no pile of papers. By the side of the window near which the table was placed there was a telephone. There was not another single 'tool' to be seen except a sort of memorandum book, and, pinned up behind the arm-chair of the chief who superintends such important operations, a large map, with his recent markings of different coloured chalk.

"General Foch finished writing a note on his memorandum. He rose. In spite of the rain, a ray of light shone on the stars on the sleeve of his dull blue uniform. His time is precious. After a rapid introduction, he went straight to the point, but with that calm which, in him, is characteristic of the measure of his thought. His voice was never raised, his gestures were contained; his eyes were sometimes half closed, and this discreet manner, even in his outer person,

made his statements all the more penetrating.

" ' Well,' he said, ' our affairs don't seem to be going so badly.' He stopped a moment, shifted his position slightly, shot a glance at the map, and went on :

" ' The Boche—since we must call him by that name—has been held up since March 27th. The flood is stemmed, the wave has been broken against the rock in its path.'

" There was silence for a second.

" ' We shall try to do better.'

" His voice scarcely changed. But in his powerful mastery of himself, in his very affability, one felt the value of the words, one felt how much thought and will power they contained.

" This short phrase, spoken so simply, seemed to us to cover a great solemnity. Shall we have cause to remember it deeply, we wonder, in the events of the near future ?

" The rain by now was beating against the window-panes.

"'What horrible weather!' said the General; 'but we must take it as it comes; it is bad for some and good for others.'"

Of this same interview, Lieutenant d'Entraygues, Army Correspondent of the *Temps*, has given the following account:

"The War Correspondents of the Franco-Anglo-American press authorised by the Higher Command on the French front were admitted together into General Foch's office, an unpretentious room in a provincial house, lined with oak panels, simple and well lighted. After the necessary introductions and hand-shakings, the General expressed his satisfaction at being able to welcome the press representatives there. Turning to the large map pinned up on the wall, and pointing out the battle line with his eyeglasses, he said:

"'Well, gentlemen, as you know,

things are not going so badly with us. The Boche—since we must call him by this name—has been held up since March 27th. You can see on this map : the wave has beaten itself out on the shingle. No doubt it has met with some obstacle. We have stopped it. Now we are going to try and do better. I don't think there is anything else to say. And you must go on with your job. I hope that the weather and the events on the front will be favourable for you. It is a time when every one must work hard. You must work with your pens ; we work with our arms.'

" The interview closed on these words.

" I think it is needless to add any description or commentary of any kind to the General's words. I have only one regret, and that is that every Frenchman could not have seen and heard him for the minute he talked to us. They would then understand definitely why we must have no doubt about victory."

THE MAN

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN

I CAN see him and hear him still as I did when I had the honour of serving under him. I remember his precise questions, his horror of the "there-or-thereabouts" type of mind, the ample domain his intellect covered. From each one he demanded the maximum of his technical knowledge and of his personal observations. His busy brain seemed to feed on facts and on data with an insatiable appetite. I remember him, too, going all by himself at an hour when the church at Cassel was deserted, to meditate on his task and seek comfort in that great affliction of which he never spoke.

But above all, I can never forget his

look, for it seemed to reveal his whole soul. Above and beyond the indomitable energy it expressed, there was a tenderness and a sadness and a great melancholy. At certain times his eyes seemed to say: Young men, you don't know what a father can suffer when mourning enters his house never to leave it. They have taken my only son, and one of my daughters is a widow. To the house that I left in the joy of a summer Sunday morning, I will go back to find little children who have never even known their father. I am coming to the twilight of life with the conscience of a good servant who will rest in the peace of his Lord. Faith in an everlasting life and in a God of goodness and mercy has sustained me in the hours of difficulty. Prayer has enlightened my spirit.

Our country has been torn and mutilated. There are thousands and thousands of fathers like me who have lost all that they loved, the only hope of

their race. My heart goes out to them. I know what it means.

But we have no right to be sorry for ourselves. The country's cause is greater than ours. Over yonder in Germany, emperors and bedizened princes — all safely sheltered from danger—pirouette and play at their great game of "Welt-politik," while they send their lieges to be murdered.

But we are humble sons of the land of France, defending our liberties. Every one does his best. From my childhood I have always had faith in my country, in the greatness of her destinies, in the final triumph of what is good and true. I know that we shall have victory. It will be complete, and our dead will be avenged. But we must work, we must struggle still. We must set all the resources of French genius to meet the shock of the oncoming barbarous horde. Spirit must conquer matter.

Young men, without a high ideal, without a spiritual conception of life,

there can only be discouragement and weakness. You are asked to make great sacrifices, and you will go on being asked to the bitter end. Accept them as I have accepted mine. Not only France, but the whole of humanity is at stake. Liberty must first of all triumph ; then we can weep on our empty hearths. over which wave the standards of victory.

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